

CHILDREN  
WITH

# false croup



## Children with **false croup**

### **General:**

False croup is often a symptom of a virus infection in the upper airways with a swelling around the vocal chords and mucosa of the throat. The most typical symptom is a cough which sounds like the bark of a sea lion.

The condition is most common in children aged 6 months to 5 years. If a child has previously been suffering from false croup, it tends to reoccur when the child catches a cold at a later point in time. After the age of 4-5 years, the symptoms become milder.

False croup is generally a mild condition that lasts 3-4 days; the coughing may last longer. False croup often gets worse at night when the child is lying down in bed, and gets better during the day.

### **How is it contracted?**

The virus spreads via mucus, snot and spittle, and infection takes place when the child inhales small droplets, e.g. after sneezing, and/or by having been in contact with hands or toys contaminated with snot, mucus or spittle.



### Symptoms:

- Often appear after a few hours of sleep
- The child has difficulty breathing in, and breathing may sound squaky or wheezing
- The cough sounds like the bark of a sea lion
- Hoarse voice
- Sometimes the child can run a fever
- The child may become restless and anxious
- In rare cases, the face and nails turn pale or have a bluish colour.

### Good advice:

- Your child will be able to breathe more easily if it sits up or if its head is elevated
- Take the child outside if the air is dry and cold
- Offer the child plenty to drink, preferably something cold; maybe ice cream
- Avoid large meals as coughing may make the child vomit
- In case of fever - make sure the child is not too hot or is covered by a warm duvet
- Air the room often
- Avoid exposing the child to passive smoking. Tobacco smoke increases and maintains the risk of irritation of the airways and increases the frequency of infections.

### When to see a doctor?

Contact a doctor if the child:

- appears to be apathetic and gets more tired
- turns blue around the mouth, nose and nails
- has difficulty breathing
- refuses to drink and dribbles a lot
- makes you worry and you feel insecure

Contact your general practitioner first because he/she knows your child better than the doctor on call. You can also get good advice and guidance from your health visitor.

### Treatment:

Since false croup is a virus infection, it cannot be treated with antibiotics. You may give the child painkillers as agreed with a doctor.

In severe cases of false croup, the child will be admitted to hospital for observation, and the symptoms may be maybe be relieved with medicine.

### Childcare:

The child can go to childcare when it can play without having difficulties breathing.

## Parental guidelines

These guidelines have been prepared by a working group set up by the departments of paediatrics in Herning, Randers, Skejby and Viborg.

The intention with these guidelines is to provide parents with advice across the following sectors: health visitors, general practitioners family doctors, doctors on call, and the staff at paediatric admission wards in the Central Denmark Region.

The parental guidelines can be seen and downloaded from the internet on the web site [www.fv.rm.dk](http://www.fv.rm.dk)

You may order additional copies from Rikke Dalsgaard,  
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