What treatment is available for croup?
There is no treatment for the virus. It will get better by itself within a few days.

Treating mild croup
Most cases of croup are mild and do not need any treatment. Sitting your child upright and comforting them is important, as getting distressed or crying may make symptoms worse. Try reading a favourite story or blowing bubbles. Don’t try to look in your child’s throat as this could make swelling worse. Some people think that steam can help but there is no evidence that it works and it could be dangerous.

Treating moderate croup
- Dexamethasone is a steroid medicine which reduces swelling. Side effects can include restlessness, headache and vomiting. Your child may need a second dose after 12 hours.
- Budesonide is another steroid that can be given via a nebuliser.
Some children with moderate croup will need to stay in hospital in case it gets worse.

Treating severe croup
If the croup is very severe it may be necessary to give an adrenaline nebuliser. This can act quickly but also wears off quickly so children will be observed closely. Side effects include sickness and fast heart rate. Oxygen may also be needed.

When should I seek help at home?
If your child develops harsh breathing or difficulty breathing while resting, it may be a more serious attack and you should seek medical advice. If you see any of these signs, seek immediate advice or phone 999 for an ambulance:
- Blue lips or tongue
- Severe difficulty in breathing
- Agitated, or becoming pale due to breathing difficulty
- Unable to swallow liquids and their own spit (drooling)
- High fever with drowsiness or appearing seriously unwell

Croup - Important Points
- Croup is a viral illness causing a barking cough and harsh breathing
- Most attacks are mild and get better on their own or with one dose of steroid medicine
- Seek help if there are signs of a severe attack

Where can I find more information?
www.nhs.uk/conditions

Who can I contact if I am worried?
Community Nursing Team: 01204 463939
(Patients with a Bolton GP only)
Ask your GP for more information or for the contact details of your local team
F5 Ward – 01204 390715
E5 Ward – 01204 390405
Croup

What is croup?
Croup is a childhood condition that causes swelling of the windpipe (trachea), the airways to the lungs (the bronchi) and the voice box (larynx). As the swelling gets worse, the airways get tighter and it becomes difficult to breathe.

What causes croup?
It is usually caused by a virus. A virus called parainfluenza virus is the most common cause. A number of other viruses can also cause croup. These include:
- Influenza A and B (flu viruses)
- Measles virus (if not vaccinated)
- Rhinovirus (common cold virus)
- Enteroviruses
- Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) which also causes an illness called bronchiolitis in babies

Is croup contagious?
The virus causing the illness can be passed on through close contact and contaminated objects or surfaces. It is often spread by breathing in droplets from infected people coughing or sneezing.

Who gets croup?
It can occur at any age but is most common between 6 months and 3 years old. More boys are affected than girls. A child can get croup at any time of the year, although it’s more likely to occur during late autumn or early winter. This may be because there are more viruses, such as colds and flu, around at this time of year. Children can get croup more than once.

What are the symptoms of croup?
Children with croup have a distinctive barking cough (like a sea lion) and will make a harsh sound, known as stridor, when they breathe in. They may also have a hoarse voice and find it difficult to breathe because their airway is blocked. Stridor is often most noticeable when children are upset or coughing. In more severe cases, it can also occur when your child is resting or sleeping. Symptoms tend to be worse at night and sometimes come on suddenly in the middle of the night. Some children have cold-like symptoms for a few days before developing croup such as sore throat, runny nose, cough and high temperature.

Are there other illnesses with similar symptoms?
Other problems that could mimic croup include:-
- Inhaling a small object such as a peanut
- Epiglottitis – a very rare but very serious infection of the epiglottis (flap in the throat that stops food from going down the wrong way)
- Tracheitis – infection of the windpipe
- Allergic reaction
- Breathing in irritating chemicals
- Acid leaking up out of the stomach (acid reflux)
- Abscess in the back of the throat
- Problem with the way the airway has developed (usually when formed in the womb)

How is croup diagnosed?
There are no specific tests for croup and the doctor or nurse practitioner will make a diagnosis based on your child’s symptoms and the sound of their cough. If you have come to hospital, your doctor or nurse will usually give your child a score to grade how serious their croup attack is. This score helps to guide the treatment needed.

How long will my child be ill?
Croup symptoms usually only last 2 days, but can occasionally last up to two weeks.