Croup

Your child has croup. This is a viral infection of the upper airway and voice box. This is common between the ages of 6 months and 4 years. Croup usually starts with a slight fever and runny nose. This is followed by a barking cough, noisy breathing, and shortness of breath. **Croup will often get worse at night**. Most children with croup do not need antibiotics or hospital care. They usually get better in 3-4 days with supportive treatment only. Sometimes cortisone medicine is used to speed recovery.

Supportive treatment of croup includes the following measures:

- Have your child drink a lot of **fluids** (water, sodas, juices).
- Comfort your child to **decrease crying and irritability.**
- Use a **cool-mist vaporizer** in the room where they sleep.
- **Elevate your child's head** on pillows to ease their breathing.
- Use **medicines for fever and congestion** to help relieve symptoms.
- Do not allow anyone to smoke around your child. **Secondhand smoke makes croup worse.**

If your child's breathing gets worse, take them outside in the cool air for 15-20 minutes. You can also try a heavy mist by taking them into the bathroom and turning on the hot shower.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF YOUR CHILD DEVELOPS:

- Increased difficulty breathing or swallowing, or excessive drooling.
- A blue color around the mouth or fingernails.
- A high fever, increased restlessness, or exhaustion.

Document Released: 12/18/2006
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.