

# Laryngitis

Laryngitis is a viral infection of the larynx, or voice box. Older children with laryngitis may become hoarse or lose their voices completely. However, the illness is rarely severe and usually gets better within a few days. In younger children, infections of the larynx and trachea (“windpipe”) may cause a barking cough, called croup.

- Sometimes, laryngitis is a symptom of a more severe infection. If your child has other symptoms, such as a high fever or difficulty breathing, call our office.

## Can laryngitis be prevented?

Have your child wash his or her hands frequently and try to avoid contact with people who have coughs or colds.

## What is laryngitis?

Laryngitis is infection of the vocal cords and surrounding area, usually caused by a virus. It is a very common, usually mild infection, especially in older children. Your child may be unable to speak above a whisper, or to speak at all. Laryngitis is generally mild and starts to clear up within 4 to 7 days.

## What does it look like?

- Your child’s voice becomes hoarse or disappears completely.
- Sore throat and cough may also be present, but hoarseness is the main symptom. Your child may “sound sicker” than he or she feels.
- Other symptoms, such as noisy or difficult breathing, are uncommon.
- In younger children, especially under age 3, an infection of the larynx and trachea is called *croup* and may cause a distinctive, “barking” cough.

## What are some possible complications of laryngitis?

- Laryngitis in older children has few complications. Your child should start to feel better in 4 to 7 days.

## How is laryngitis treated?

- Just as for colds, there is no specific treatment for laryngitis. Antibiotics are usually unnecessary.
- Your child should rest his or her voice as much as possible for a few days.
- If your child is feeling particularly ill, he or she may have to rest more and drink extra liquids.
- Pain relievers (such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen) may help to reduce sore throat. Drinking plenty of liquids may also help your child’s throat feel better. Have your child avoid exposure to anything that may irritate the throat, especially cigarette smoke.

## When should I call your office?

Laryngitis should start to improve within a few days. If your child’s hoarseness or sore throat doesn’t get better within 1 week, or if symptoms get worse, call our office.

Call our office if your child develops any of the following symptoms:

- High fever.
- Difficulty breathing or wheezing (high-pitched sounds coming from the lungs).