

Hoarse Voice - Symptom

Definition

- A hoarse voice (or cry) is raspy and deeper than normal
- If hoarseness is severe, the child can do little more than whisper

Health Information

Causes

- Hoarseness occurs when the vocal cords are irritated and swollen.
- The medical name for this is laryngitis.
- Most laryngitis in children is part of a cold. Viruses that cause croup in younger children cause a hoarse voice in older children. Reason: the airway is now wider.
- In allergic children, a hoarse voice can be part of an allergic reaction. This is common during pollen season.
- Overuse of the vocal cords can injure them. Examples are loud, frequent shouting, yelling, singing or throat clearing.

Care Advice

1. **Overview:**
 - Most brief hoarseness lasting minutes is caused by breathing in something that irritated the vocal cords. Examples are powdered sugar or exhaust fumes.
 - Most hoarseness without a cause is part of a cold.
 - Here is some care advice that should help.
2. **Drink Warm Liquids:**
 - Drink soothing warm liquids.
 - Age over 1 year. Can sip warm fluids such as chicken broth or apple juice.
 - Age over 6 years. Can also suck on cough drops or hard candy. Butterscotch seems to help.
 - Age over 8 years. Can also gargle. Use warm water with a little table salt added. A liquid antacid can be added instead of salt. Use Mylanta or the store brand. No prescription is needed.
3. **Rest the Voice:**
 - Do not yell and scream. (Reason: Causes vocal cord strain.)
 - Have your child try to talk as little as possible. He or she can write notes instead for a few days.
 - Also, avoid clearing the throat. (Reason: Can make hoarseness worse.)
4. **Humidifier:**
 - If the air in your home is dry, use a humidifier. Reason: Dry air makes hoarseness worse.
5. **Avoid Tobacco Smoke:**
 - Tobacco smoke makes hoarseness and coughing much worse.
6. **What to Expect:**
 - A hoarse voice that's part of a cold may last 1-2 weeks.
 - Hoarseness from strained vocal cords can last longer.
 - Hoarseness from allergies will go away after you get the allergies under control.

7. **Return to School:**

- Your child does not need to miss any school if a hoarse voice is the only symptom.

Call Your Doctor If

- Trouble breathing or swallowing occurs
- Hoarseness lasts over 2 weeks
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

Pediatric Care Advice

Author: Barton Schmitt MD, FAAP

Copyright 2000-2022 Schmitt Pediatric Guidelines LLC

Disclaimer: This health information is for educational purposes only. You the reader assume full responsibility for how you choose to use it. The information contained in this handout should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. Listing of any resources does not imply an endorsement.