Remedies for Coughs & Croup

Croup is doing the rounds this year and it can be pretty nasty. Sometimes a visit to the hospital or GP is required but you can still use your remedies in the very initial stages and through the process if this does happen.

The first sign of croup can be a coughing, gasping, choking attack in the middle of the night (although sometimes in the day too). It can be frightening for both parents and child and is often when the ambulance is called or one of the help lines.

Below is some of the indications for some of the more common cough remedies.

As always if someone has a long standing or very acute cough which is not responding to treatment contact your healthcare provider. Whooping cough is always a possibility even if vaccinated and is endemic in some areas. It can be treated successfully with homeopathy but requires professional care.

Coughs

You will see that many of these remedies look similar which is why coughs can be difficult to treat at home. Looking for some of the mental/emotional symptoms by careful observation can be very helpful in selecting a remedy as this narrows down the choice. Failing that you could select either our Cough – Dry or Cough – Chesty combinations which contain the most indicated remedies in each category.

Aconite (Aco) Coughs and croup come on very suddenly after exposure to cold, dry air or wind. Often accompanied by high fever but not always. May wake from first part of sleep with a dry, barky cough. Generally there is no mucous. Worse at night or during sleep, child may wake at midnight with cough (similar Spong). Patient (and parents!) may be highly anxious, restless or fearful.

Antimonium Tartaricum (Ant-t)

Ant Tart is indicated for a wide range of chest problems including pneumonia and asthma, but these should not be treated in the home.

Noisy, rattling cough as if chest filled with mucous. Rattling mucous that is difficult to cough up particularly in small babies and old people. Gagging and vomiting of mucous or food with the cough. Often the child will not want to be looked at, disturbed or spoken to. Cough may be worse for eating. Paroxysms of coughing. Thirstless with the cough Worse at night especially from 10pm to midnight, for eating, for warmth, lying down. Better for coughing up mucous, sitting up.

Arsenicum Album (Ars Alb) Cough from allergy or infection or irritated air passages. The patient is often chilly, restless, anxious, thirsty for sips. Worse night from 12 to 2am, for cold or open air, for cold drinks. Better for warmth and warm drinks and for sitting upright.

Bryonia Very painful dry cough which comes on with each movement or deep breathing. May hold the chest or head with the cough. Worse for eating or swallowing, overheating, lying with the head low. Better for open air.

Belladonna (Bell) High fever with paroxysms of coughing. Hard, barking cough. Suffocating cough with pain in the larynx, waking after midnight. Child cries out before the cough. Fever with red, hot face, swollen, glassy, red eyes. Worse around 3pm, for touch or jarring.
Calc Carb (Calc C) I find this a good remedy in small children where Pulsatilla appears indicated but doesn’t do the job. Chesty, loose, yellow mucous, dry at night and loose in the morning. As if a plug of mucous is moving up and down in the trachea provoking the cough. **Worse** for cold damp weather, drafts, eating.

Chamomilla (Cham) Coughs in children and infants especially during teething. Chronic cough in cranky, difficult children – also consider Nux Vomica. **Worse** for anger, at night during sleep, at 10pm and 9am (roughly).

Drosera (Dros) Paroxysms of hard, deep and often violent cough. Very irritate airways with tickling and dryness in throat. Painful cough – must hold chest. Suffocative cough, so painful he cannot cough until he holds his stomach. **Worse** at night especially 12 to 2am, for drinking or eating, talking, for smoke, as soon as the head touches the pillow. **Better** on sitting up, walking slowly.

Hepar Sulph (Hep S) Product cough with thick yellow mucus or can be dry and croupy. Patient is often very cold and cough can be worse for being uncovered or undressing, as well as drafts. **Worse** evening in bed until midnight, for cold weather and cold air and for cold drink or food. **Better** for warmth and bringing up mucous.

Ipecac (Ip) Incessant, violent coughing with every breath. Violent gagging and vomiting from the cough, with or without nausea. Chest sounds full of mucous which is not better for coughing (compare Ant Tart). **Worse** for warmth, dampness.

Kali Bich (Kali-bi) Hacking, brassy or choking cough, with expectoration of sticky, thick, yellow mucous which can be drawn out into strings (Coc-c. for clear strings). Rattling, productive cough often associated with sinusitis. Mucous is difficult to cough up, sounds stuck and sticky. **Worse** at night from 1 to 3 am, from eating. **Better** once he warms up in bed, for sitting up, a little better for coughing up some mucous.

Phosphorus (Phos) Every cold seems to go to the chest – these children really do need constitutional treatment! Dry, tickly, exhausting cough. Tightness of chest with racking, painful cough. Trembling and exhaustion with cough. Headache with cough. Hoarseness and almost total loss of voice. Mucous may be clear, green or tinged with blood. **Worse** in the evening/twilight, for cold air, talking, going from a warm room into the cold. **Better** for warmth.

Pulsatilla (Puls) Loose rattling cough with green, juicy expectoration (mucous!). It’s good for children with night time coughs from post nasal drainage and may be dry at night and loose in the morning with yellow or green mucous. **Worse** in the evening or at night in bed, becoming cold, from a warm room, after becoming wet, for warm drinks. **Better** for open or cool air, gentle walking, lying propped up.

Spongia (Spong) Dry hacking cough often described as seal like. Barking, croupy or irritate cough often with constriction or tickling in the larynx. Suffocative cough. **Worse** before or at midnight, for cold dry air, for cold drinks. **Better** Warm drinks or food, from eating, drinking or nursing, from sucking on a lolly, from bending the head forward.

**Croup**

While the remedies for Croup are generally the same as for Coughs, there are a few additional symptoms which I’ve listed separately. Read the remedies below in conjunction with the Cough notes above. There are obviously many more remedies for Croup but professional help would be required to select some of the smaller remedies, although generally we would treat the whole child rather than the Croup.
The first three remedies below are what we traditionally term the “croup trio” and are most often indicated. They may be required in stages 1 to 3 as listed, or may just be selected according to need.

Most people will tend to recognize Aconite as the first remedy for croup, but any of the three below could be indicated.

If symptoms are severe give the 30c potency every 10 minutes for up to 5 doses or until symptoms start to settle – whichever happens first. Then repeat the dose either if the symptoms come back or every 2 hours for the first day. Change the remedy if the symptom picture seems to change eg Hepar Sulph or Spongia may follow Aconite.

Often if Aconite is indicated first but doesn’t completely halt the progress, Hepar Sulph may be indicated if the croupy cough settles into a loose, hacking cough.

In severe cases, particularly where there has been a hospital/GP visit, constitutional treatment is the best option to strengthen the immune system. This is also the case where the bouts are recurrent either through the winter or each winter.

1. **Aconite** – mainly useful on the first day of the attack. In addition to the comments under Cough, the child may wake with stridor (*def: a harsh respiratory sound due to any of various forms of obstruction of the breathing passages.*), which is worse in inspiration and for drinking. The child may cling to the parents.

2. **Spongia** – Dry barking cough, often described as a seal’s bark or at other times as the sound made by a saw going through wood. Noisy, whistling, wheezing type of stridor (see above). Child wakes with fright and a suffocative cough. Also see under Cough.

3. **Hepar Sulph** – Croup comes on in the night, often at 2 to 4am or toward morning with thick rattling, yellow-green mucous. **Better** for moist warm air such as shower or vaporiser. Also see under Cough.

**Drosera** – Dry, barking cough. Tickly, irritating, spasmodic cough with wheezing. Child may hold chest when coughing. **Worse** at night on lying down.

**Ipecac** – Croup with gagging, retching or vomiting. Often with an audible wheeze and even cyanosis (blueness). **Worse** at night, in a warm room. Also see under Cough.

**Kali Bich** – “Metallic” sounding cough and spells of extreme breathlessness. Thick, stringy mucous. **Worse** at night, from cold air. Also see under Cough.

**Phosphorus** – Hard racking painful cough causing the child to hold his chest. Also see Cough above.

*As always if your home prescribing is unsuccessful seek help from your healthcare provider as soon as possible.*

**Source:**
Desktop Companion to Physical Pathology; Roger Morrison MD
Nature’s Materia Medica; Murphy