

Croup, Chest Congestion and Castor Oil Tonya Judd, M.H.

When one of my children was a baby he began to have serious health issues soon after I weaned him from breast feeding. This was back in the day when I was just beginning my herbal education. Due to the severity of his health issues, I was given the gift of learning much in a short time frame. Not only did I learn about herbs, but I also learned to trust the feelings and promptings with which I was blessed. This particular child had repeated and severe bouts of croup. I kept suggesting that he had food allergies and was shot down each and every time I suggested it. I even had one pediatrician who went so far as to say, "Listen honey, if you want to play scientist, you just go right ahead. I am putting him on antibiotics for 3 weeks." That was the last straw for me. I took him to an allergist and found that he had 33 different food allergies! How he was healed with diet and other means is another article that I will have to write at a later date. Today I would like to give you some tools to help keep your child out of the hospital and off of Prednizone (steroids used to open the airway) and other harmful drugs, should your child develop croup or should your child or yourself be dealing with chest congestion, bronchitis, etc.



Croup is described as an infection of the upper airway or laryngo trachea bronchitis which equates to inflammation of the larynx, trachea and bronchi. Croup is almost always classified as being a virus. In my son's case, the cause of his croup was food induced allergies and not viral at all. In any case of croup, the airway (larynx and trachea) become swollen. When this swelling occurs, the body's response is to cough. This irritates the area and causes more inflammation. In a small child or baby, this already small opening becomes even smaller with inflammation. Croup has a very distinctive sound and has been described as sounding like a seal barking. Stridor can often accompany croup and is a high pitched, loud vibrating sound made as the child breathes.

One of the most effective things I used for my son was castor oil. Castor oil, when applied to the chest, opens up the airways and allows the individual to breathe. The ricinoleic acid in castor oil acts as a decongestant on the lymphatic system, collects waste from your tissues, and carries it to the bloodstream to be eliminated. To apply a castor oil pack, gently warm the castor oil in a sauce pan on the stove (not the microwave). Watch closely as it heats up extremely fast. Place a piece of cotton or wool flannel in the castor oil and allow it to saturate the flannel. Place the saturated flannel on the chest and the back. Test the temperature before placing on the skin. Apply it to the chest, throat and back and cover the area with plastic wrap (this is to keep the castor oil warm and to keep the castor oil from ruining clothes, furniture and bedding). Secure it

with an ACE™ bandage wrapped around the chest and place a warm shirt or pajamas over the top. I would suggest using a heating pad or hot water bottle over the area. In all obviousness, if you are using this on an infant, toddler or small child, please use common sense and do not leave your child unattended while using a heating pad, so that you can monitor the temperature of the heating pad and to ensure the cord from the heating pad does not get wrapped around the neck. The heat is helpful, but not totally necessary. Others, as in the story below, have still experienced amazing results without the use of heat.

Fast forward many years and I had the “opportunity” to test the castor oil on myself. I had whooping cough and had tried everything I could think of to have just a few brief moments of relief from the incessant coughing. I remembered to use castor oil on my chest. I was amazed at the instant relief I received once I placed the castor oil soaked flannel on my chest. I was so grateful for the relief it brought to me! I can only imagine what it must do for little ones with much smaller airways and lung cavities when those airways are compromised.

Late one night a while back, a friend of mine called. Everyone in the family was sick with chest congestion. She had a new 3 week old baby and the baby’s breathing was labored and shallow. He was not in respiratory distress. She asked if she could use castor oil on her new baby. Of course! She also used cayenne ointment rubbed on the top of the castor oil. In addition, she applied garlic oil on her baby’s feet. She called the next morning and was so excited. She said that within 10 minutes of applying the castor oil, their baby took a huge deep breath, relaxed, was able to sleep comfortably and was doing fantastic!

Other herbal aids that are extremely helpful:

*In addition to the castor oil packs, my son and I also slept in a 4’x4’ play tent with a cool mist humidifier which was a lifesaver many nights! So get comfy and make it a party. I later had a conversation with a different pediatrician and told him about the tent with the humidifier and he was so excited about the idea that he started telling the parents who came to him for help with their children who had croup. He loved that it was working so wonderfully! Think of it as a modern twist on the “Croup Tents” of days gone by! And, once again, use common sense and do not leave your infant or child unattended in the “croup tent.”

*Cayenne oil or ointment rubbed on the chest, back and throat.

*Sen Sei ointment rubbed on the chest, back and throat.

*Lobelia rubbed on the chest, back and throat and given internally is also helpful.

*In my son’s case, a garlic and catnip enema worked amazingly well in breaking up the congestion and was the real turning point in his healing. I have found that cleansing the colon has an immediate effect on healing the respiratory system and pulls mucus from the lungs.

*Garlic oil rubbed on the bottom of the feet.

*Mullein oil rubbed on the chest and back helps to break up any congestion.

*Support the immune system with fresh garlic.

*Peppermint tea can also help to relax the body and lessen coughing spasms.

*Anti-spasmodic tincture rubbed on the chest and back is also very beneficial to stop a coughing spasm.

*Nursing mom's remember that if you have a sick little one, if you take the herbs needed, your baby will get them through your breast milk!

I would love to hear of your positive experiences in using castor oil

***Please be wise should you encounter severe breathing distress and take your child to the ER if necessary.

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