

Laryngomalacia

Information for Parents and Carers



What is Laryngomalacia?

The tissue in the voice box (larynx) is usually firm (like the end of your nose) and helps give the voice box its shape and produce sound. In laryngomalacia, this tissue is soft and floppy. This means that when your baby breathes in, the floppy tissue folds inwards causing noisy breathing known as a stridor. Laryngomalacia is the most common cause of noisy breathing in infants.

Why does it happen?

We do not know the exact cause of laryngomalacia. It is likely connected to how the muscles in this area have formed during pregnancy and they need extra time to grow and become strong. Laryngomalacia can sound alarming because of the noisy breathing but generally does not cause harm or put your baby at risk.

What are the signs and symptoms of laryngomalacia?

- Noisy breathing when the baby breathes in (stridor)
- Worse when taking faster, bigger breaths such as when crying, feeding or after a feed, very active or lying flat.

Concerning signs and symptoms not associated with laryngomalacia

You should seek urgent medical help if your baby has any of the following:

- Difficulty with feeding – too breathless and struggling to take full volumes of feed
- Pauses in breathing (apnoeas)
- Colour changes (going blue)
- Poor weight gain
- Hoarse cry or voice.

How is the diagnosis made?

In the majority of babies, the diagnosis is made by your GP or Health Visitor checking the symptoms with you, observing your baby breathing (a video can be very helpful) and a normal examination of the baby. No other tests are usually required.

How can this be treated?

No treatment is usually needed for laryngomalacia, and most infants completely outgrow this problem by the age of two.

Sometimes the baby may also have symptoms of milk reflux. If this is the case, please speak to your GP about management options for this.

When to seek help

If your baby has any of the above concerning symptoms, you should make an appointment with your GP. But if you are very worried about your baby you can call NHS 24 on 111 or take them to the Paediatric Accident and Emergency Department:

50 Little France Crescent
Edinburgh BioQuarter
Edinburgh
EH16 4TJ

