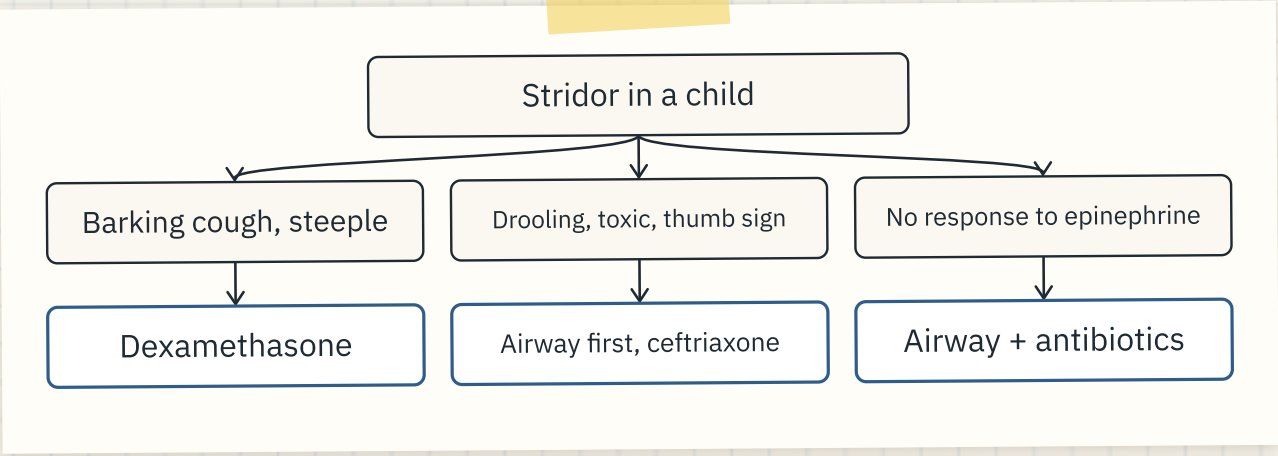
Stridor in children: 3 airways

Croup, epiglottitis, bacterial tracheitis



Step by step

1. Stridor means upper airway obstruction: where is the narrowing?
2. Croup: below the cords; epiglottitis: above; tracheitis: trachea
3. Croup: dexamethasone 0.6 mg/kg, usually
4. Epiglottitis: do not examine the throat; airway first
5. No response to epinephrine: think tracheitis

	Look	Film	First step
Croup	Viral, barking	Steeple	Dexamethasone
Epiglottitis	Drooling, toxic	Thumb	Airway, then ceftriaxone
Tracheitis	Toxic, post-viral	Often irregular	Airway + antibiotics

Croup vs epiglottitis vs bacterial tracheitis

Rule of thumb

Barking = croup, drooling = epiglottitis

No response to epinephrine = tracheitis

Observe at least 2 h after nebulised epinephrine

Exam traps

- Do not examine the throat in suspected epiglottitis.
- A steeple can also appear in tracheitis; the film supports, but does not make, the diagnosis.
- Repeating croup treatment delays the airway and antibiotics.

Croup vs epiglottitis vs bacterial tracheitis: stridor in children

Video, written lesson, practice question and sources: medservatory.com/usmle-step-2-ck/paediatrics/croup-vs-epiglottitis-vs-bacterial-tracheitis

For exam study only, not medical advice. Follow local guidelines and your lab's ranges.
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