

Voice care advice following vocal fold surgery

Information for patients

This information aims to give you advice on how to look after your voice before and after surgery. The advice will speed up your recovery and get the best results from your surgery. Immediately after your surgery it is advised you do not speak for 2 days. This information will support you to prepare for this and advise you when to start using your voice again.

Before surgery

- Warn your friends and family that you will not be able to speak for 2 days following your surgery.
- Explain to your employers what you are having done and what they can do to help you when you return to work. You may need to do alternative duties and avoid long conversations or take time off work depending on your vocal demands.
- Bring pen and pad to hospital so you can write things down after your surgery and avoid using your voice.

After surgery

The advice below is extremely important to optimise your vocal recovery.

Stage 1 (Full voice rest – 2 days)

Two days following your operation you should observe full voice rest. This means:

- Avoid talking as much as possible. Write or text instead of using your voice.
- Drink lots of fluid (especially water) to keep your throat moist (2 litres daily).
- Avoid smoky and dusty atmospheres which will irritate your throat.
- Avoid clearing your throat by coughing (swallow firmly instead).
- Steam inhalation.

Stage 2 (Gentle voice use – 5 days)

On day 3 start using your voice gently. This means:

- No speaking loudly, shouting or singing.
- No long periods of speaking (i.e. without rest periods).
- No whispering.
- Do not 'strain' or 'push' your voice in any way.
- Try gentle voice exercises like humming gently on a comfortable pitch at the start of the day.
- Continue to drink lots of fluids and avoid obvious throat irritants such as very hot or cold drinks, smoky or dry environments, dust, chemicals, fumes, cleaning fluids, solvents, very spicy/hot foods.
- Alcohol should be avoided during this initial recovery period.

If you are unable to use your voice gently then stay on full rest for two more days.

Follow up

In most cases you will have a follow up outpatient appointment with either the Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) or the Speech and Language Therapy Department. If this is **not** the case and your voice is not improving within 1 month of your operation, then you should contact your surgeon's secretary, or your speech therapist if you are known to one.

If you have any concerns about your condition or the advice provided in this leaflet, please speak to a member of the team caring for you.

Contact details

ENT Speech and Language Therapy: **0131 242 1933**

Useful websites

Visit the websites or scan the QR codes below for more advice.

The British Voice Association has free literature with advice on preparing for voice surgery and voice care advice:

www.britishvoiceassociation.org.uk



If you would like further information about health conditions and treatment options, you may wish to have a look at the **NHS website**:

www.nhs.uk

