

## Speech and Language Therapy Service

# Voice care after laryngeal surgery

Taking care of your larynx (voice box) after surgery is essential to allow time for your voice to recover and prevent any further injury as your larynx heals. Please follow the advice given in this leaflet:

### Complete voice rest

Immediately after the operation you will need to rest your voice in order to let the vocal cords recover from surgery. This is to allow healing and prevent scarring.

- Do not speak at all for the first 48 hours after surgery use pen and paper/text messages/ emails to communicate. Warn your family and friends before your surgery that you will not be able to speak to them.
- If you are a professional voice user (e.g. teacher, singer, actor etc.), you might have to rest your voice for longer- please check with your surgeon.

### After complete voice rest

**It is important to start using your voice again following the period of complete rest, but gently at first. Do not strain or force it if it doesn't sound 'normal'.**

Once you have allowed time for your voice box to recover, it is important to start talking again so that your muscles which produce your voice do not become weak.

- Start talking at a pitch and volume level that feels comfortable and effortless. Do not push or strain to talk.
- Use your voice for short periods of time at first, take regular breaks and



## Patient Information

allow your voice to rest.

- Avoid shouting, singing, or whispering as this can put extra strain on your voice. If your job involves using your voice, talk to your employer about your surgery and the importance of resting your voice.

### **General vocal care advice**

- Drink at least two litres of water throughout the day. Avoid very hot drinks, and drinks that contain caffeine such as tea, coffee, fizzy drinks
- Do not smoke, or drink alcohol
- Avoid throat clearing and coughing, as this can damage your vocal cords. If you feel you need to cough, try sipping water or sucking a sugar free boiled sweet instead
- Do not do any heavy manual work such as lifting, digging, pushing or physical exercises as this will put further strain on your throat muscles.
- Avoid contact with strong chemical fumes, paints, aerosol sprays, perfumes etc.
- If you suffer with acid reflux/heartburn, discuss this with your consultant or GP. They may wish to put you on a medication to prevent this damaging your vocal cords.
- Use steam inhalation for ten minutes, twice a day. Lean your head over a bowl of steaming water and gently breathe in. Do not put anything in the water such as decongestants, menthol.

If you continue to have difficulties with your voice after surgery, and wish to see a Speech and Language Therapist, please contact either your consultant or your GP for a referral. The Speech and Language Therapy team will assess your voice and can provide advice, exercises, and strategies to help improve it further.

### **For further information**

#### **Coventry Patients**

- Coventry Adult Community Speech and Language Therapy: 024 7696 1010
- UHCW Macmillan Head & Neck Speech and Language Therapy: 024 7696 6449

## Patient Information

**Please note that this service is for patients with a diagnosis of Head & Neck cancer only.**

### Patients outside Coventry

Please contact your GP for details of your local Speech and Language Therapy team.

If you have any questions or comments about this information sheet, please contact the UHCW Macmillan Speech and Language Therapy team on 024 7696 6449

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact us on 024 7696 6449 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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#### Document History

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