Patient Information

University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust

Speech and Language Therapy Service

Voice care after laryngeal surgery

Taking care of your voice box (larynx) after surgery is important for healing and to prevent further injury. Follow the advice in this leaflet to help your voice recover.

Complete voice rest

Right after your surgery, it is important to give your voice complete rest to help your vocal cords heal and prevent scarring.

- Do not speak at all for the first 48 hours after the surgery. Use pen and paper, text messages or emails to communicate during this time. Let your family and friends know before your surgery that you will not be able to speak to them.
- If your work involves using your voice professionally (like teaching, singing, acting), you may need to rest your voice for a longer period. Be sure to check with your surgeon for advice.

After complete voice rest

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

Once your voice box has had time to recover, it is important to start using your voice again so that the muscles involved do not become weak.

- Start talking at a pitch and volume level that feels comfortable and easy. Do not force yourself to talk if it feels difficult.
- Use your voice for short periods of time at first, take regular breaks and allow your voice to rest.

- Avoid shouting, singing, or whispering, as these 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 2 litres of water every day. Avoid very hot drinks and drinks that contain caffeine such as tea, coffee, and fizzy drinks.
- Do not smoke, or drink alcohol.
- Avoid throat clearing and coughing, as these can damage your vocal cords. If you feel you need to cough, try sipping water or sucking on a sugar free boiled sweet instead.
- Do not do any heavy physical work such as lifting, digging, pushing or physical exercises, as this can strain your throat muscles.
- Stay away from strong chemical fumes, paints, aerosol sprays, perfumes etc.
- If you suffer with acid reflux or heartburn, talk to your consultant or GP. They may wish to put you on a medication to prevent this damaging your vocal cords.
- Use steam inhalation for 10 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 or menthol.

If you continue to have difficulties with your voice after surgery and would like to see a Speech and Language therapist, please ask your consultant or GP to refer you. The therapist will assess your voice and can provide advice, exercises, and strategies to help improve it further.

For more information

Patients in Coventry:

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

Please note: This service is only for patients who have been diagnosed with Head & Neck cancer.

Patients outside Coventry:

Please speak to your GP to find out how to contact 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.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

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