

# Recovering from your vocal cord surgery

You are just about to, or have just had, an operation on your vocal cords. To get maximum benefit from the operation there are a few rules you need to follow in the early stages afterwards.

If you get a chance, prepare your friends and family for this before the operation, as it will affect your ability to speak for the first few days.

## Complete voice rest

- For the first **three** days after the operation, we recommend that you **do not speak at all**. Do not even whisper. Communicate with your friends and relatives by writing notes or gesture with your hands. You can also use text messaging or emails.
- If you are a professional voice user, for example a teacher, actor or singer we suggest you try to stay quiet for **five** days after the operation. This will allow some healing time, before you put your vocal cords under any strain at all.

## Can I eat and drink as normal?

- You can eat and drink normally. However, as usual, keep caffeine intake levels to a minimum. If you suffer from acid reflux or indigestion, take your normal medication and avoid foods that you know do not agree with you.
- Try not to clear your throat, but swallow with or without water.
- Make sure you drink plenty of water, aim for eight glasses of water a day to keep your voice box hydrated. You may feel very dry in your mouth and throat after your surgery because of the anaesthetic and the surgery itself. This should improve after a few days.
- Use steam inhalations if your throat feels dry and uncomfortable (breathing in the steam from a bowl of hot water with a towel over your head for 5-10 minutes – use hot rather than boiling water to avoid scalding).
- Avoid smoking and drinking alcohol during your three/five days of voice rest and avoid spending time in places where others are smoking.

## What do I do after my period of voice rest?

- After your three/five days of complete voice rest, start talking at a pitch and volume that is always comfortable and feels effortless.
- Do not push or strain to talk. In most instances, your voice may be hoarse for a period after your surgery and this is to be expected whilst swelling is present. Your speech and language therapist (SLT) will guide you on this.
- Do not try to shout or sing until your doctor or speech and language therapist tells you it is safe to do so.
- You may have been seen by a speech and language therapist before your surgery, who will have explained to you how your larynx (voice box) and vocal cords work. If you have **not** informed your speech and language therapist about your surgical date to arrange pre and post-operative appointments please do so immediately. The SLT usually wishes to see you 7-14 days after your surgery.
- You may have been given some exercises to practise to make you more aware of how to use your voice better. Re-start the exercises seven days after your operation or when advised to do so by your speech and language therapist.

### Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Speech and Language department at **Guy's Hospital** on **020 7188 6233** or **St. Thomas' Hospital** on **020 7188 6240, Monday–Friday, 9:30am – 5pm**

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets)

## Useful sources of information

### Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

### Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS)      e: [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints)      e: [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk)

### Language and Accessible Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

t: 020 7188 8815      e: [languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk)

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