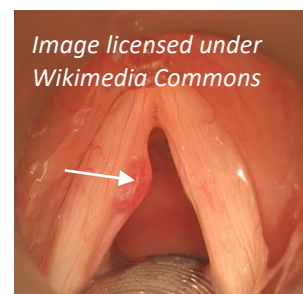


# Vocal fold polyps

This leaflet explains what vocal fold polyps are and how they can be managed.

## What are vocal fold polyps?

Polyps appear as a bump, a stalk-like growth or blister-like lesion. They usually occur on one of the two vocal folds, but can occur on both. Vocal fold polyps are diagnosed by an ear, nose and throat (ENT) doctor.



## What causes vocal fold polyps?

- Polyps usually occur as a result of trauma, such as an episode of shouting, screaming or other vocal abuse, in combination with infection, allergy, pollution or endocrine disorders.
- Chronic irritation of the larynx (voicebox), for example through smoking, inhalation of fumes.
- Gastric acid reflux may also cause a polyp to form.

## How do polyps affect the voice?

If you have a polyp, your voice may be restricted to a lower pitch range, often sounding rough or breathy. The voice tends to deteriorate with use. There may be the sensation of something in the throat, such as stubborn mucous that is difficult to clear; therefore, vigorous throat clearing may occur. Try to avoid throat clearing if possible, as prolonged throat clearing can irritate the throat. Instead, try taking sips of water or doing a strong saliva swallow instead.

## What treatment is available?

Vocal cord polyps are usually painless. If you are experiencing a sore throat, there is no reason not to try simple over the counter remedies – ask your pharmacist for advice. If the throat pain or discomfort continues, seek medical advice.

Voice therapy, provided by a specialist speech and language therapist, can be successful if the polyp is very small. The therapist can help you use your voice in a healthy way and work with you to improve how your voice sounds.

Larger polyps are removed by an ENT specialist. Surgery should be followed by voice therapy, to reduce the possibility of recurrence.

## Contact us

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To find out more about our Trust visit [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

Caroline Parry, RBFT, Speech and Language Therapy, July 2023. Next review due: July 2025

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