



Vocal cord nodules

This leaflet explains what vocal cord nodules are and how they can be managed.

What are vocal cord nodules?

Nodules are non-malignant, small swellings. They arise on the edges of the vocal cords, which are situated in the voice box (larynx). They normally arise at the points where the vocal cords come together with the greatest force and usually occur on both vocal cords.

What causes nodules to form?

Nodules can form when the vocal cords come together with too great a force over a long period of time. The damage can be caused or aggravated by misuse of the voice when speaking or singing; persistent screaming; shouting, or chronic coughing.

Sometimes nodules occur alongside acid reflux so it is important to follow any management suggested to minimise reflux from occurring.

What effect will nodules have on my voice?

Nodules interfere with the movements of the vocal cords, preventing them from being able to vibrate and come together properly.

The voice of someone with nodules can be described as hoarse, rough or breathy, often with a lowered pitch. People with nodules may also experience a 'lump in the throat' sensation. These symptoms of voice change can also be present due to different causes, so a diagnosis of nodules should be made by an ENT doctor.

What can be done to get rid of nodules?

When nodules first appear, they are small, soft and pink in colour. Voice therapy can be very successful at this stage. Voice therapy is provided by a Speech and Language Therapist, specialist in voice.

Voice therapy usually involves teaching good voice care and eliminating vocal behaviours that may be contributing to the nodules forming. Good voicing techniques are explained, including how to reduce any excess tension in the larynx.

Contributing medical problems such as reflux and allergies can be treated with medication. If you suspect you may have a degree of acid reflux, please inform your speech and language therapist.

If left untreated, nodules become larger, white in colour and more solid. People with hard solid nodules may require surgery in addition to voice therapy. Surgery removes the nodules. Once nodules resolve it is important to keep looking after your voice, to prevent them returning.

Contact us

Speech & Language Therapy
Outpatient Therapies Level 1 Battle Block
Royal Berkshire Hospital
London Road, Reading RG1 5AN
Tel: 0118 322 5205
Email: rbft.speechlanguage@nhs.net

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

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

Written by Caroline Parry, RBFT Speech and Language Therapy, March 2024
Next review due: March 2026