

# Valve changing and the 'Out of hours' service: Voice after laryngectomy

This leaflet outlines the Speech and Language Therapy service for patients with a laryngectomy in Berkshire.

## The Speech and Language Therapy service for laryngectomy patients

The Speech and Language Therapy service for patients with laryngectomy in Berkshire operates Monday-Friday (8.00am-3.00pm) out of the **Royal Berkshire Hospital**.

If you have a laryngectomy-related query, please telephone the Royal Berkshire Hospital on **0118 322 5205** in the first instance. Or you can email [rbft.speechlanguage@nhs.net](mailto:rbft.speechlanguage@nhs.net)

## When will I need to change my valve?

Your valve needs changing if it is leaking. You may see fluid leaking through or around the valve or find that you cough after drinking. You may notice that your stoma protector / heat and moisture exchange (HME) cassettes are stained with what you have drunk. It may also need changing if you notice a deterioration in your voice quality.

**A leaking valve is not an emergency. If it occurs out of office hours, you should be able to wait for an appointment in office hours. Do not forget to bring your dilator and any other valve 'kit' to your appointment.**

## What do I need to do when my valve needs changing?

If you have been taught how to self-change your valve, you can do this at home. Please ensure you have a spare valve with you and are familiar with the 'Out of hours' service.

If your valve is usually changed at the hospital, you need to make a speech and language therapy appointment as soon as possible. Call **0118 322 5205**. If nobody answers, please leave a message and we will return your call.

## HMEs and stoma protection

If the valve is leaking, you can still continue to protect your stoma in the usual way, for example, wearing a baseplate and HME cassette.

## Can I drink if my valve needs changing?

You can continue to drink if your valve needs changing, but please take small sips and thicken your drinks to Level 2 or if needed, Level 3 consistency, using '**Nestle Resource Thicken Up Clear**' powder. If you have been given a 'plug insert' and know how to use it, you can also use this.

Thickening your drinks will help prevent them running through your valve into your airway. It will minimise coughing when drinking and help to prevent a chest infection developing.

If you need thickener, you can get this on repeat prescription from your GP.

## What if I am unable to make a voice?

If you are unable to get a voice, but don't think the valve is leaking, the valve may be blocked. Clean it carefully with your cleaning brush and try again. If the problem persists, try having a hot (not scalding) drink and also try 'flushing' the valve with the cleaning pipette and a little water if familiar with this technique.

If this still does not work, please make a speech and language therapy appointment. This is not an emergency and you will need to book an appointment.

## What should I do if my valve falls out?

Immediate action needs to be taken if your valve has fallen out. The puncture will close within 1-2 hours if nothing is done to stent it, but please do not panic.

**Within office hours** (9am-4pm), please insert your dilator or Ryles tube into the puncture to keep it open. Contact the Speech and language Therapy Team at the Royal Berkshire Hospital on 0118 322 5205 or email [rbft.speechlanguage@nhs.net](mailto:rbft.speechlanguage@nhs.net)



Remember you will need to thicken your fluids to reduce any leaking around the dilator/tube and you will have no voice until a replacement valve is fitted.

If you cannot insert the dilator go straight to your local Emergency Department (A&E).

**Out of hours** there are two options:

- 1) **Insert your dilator / Ryles tube into the puncture hole:** Tape it into place and contact the Speech and Language Department **during working hours** to make an appointment. Again, you will need to have thickened fluids during this time, to stop leakage around the dilator.
- 2) **If unable to insert the dilator:** Attend your nearest Emergency Department (A&E) as soon as possible. You may use an emergency ambulance if necessary.

At the hospital a dilator / Ryles tube will be inserted into the puncture for you and taped into place. You will likely then be sent home and must contact the Speech and Language Therapy Department to make an appointment so that a new valve can be fitted.

## Contact us

Speech & Language Therapy

Inpatient Therapies Level 1 Battle Block

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Tel: 0118 322 5205, Mobile: 07901 224017 Email: [rbft.headandnecksalt.nhs.net](mailto:rbft.headandnecksalt.nhs.net)

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.**

Speech & Language Therapy, June 2023. Next review due: June 2025

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