



Laryngeal papilloma

This leaflet is for people diagnosed with laryngeal papilloma. It explains what laryngeal papilloma is and how it can be managed.

What is laryngeal papilloma?

Papillomas are benign (non-cancerous), wart-like growths. They may occur over the vocal folds in your larynx (voice box) and may extend into the trachea (airway). Someone with recurrent laryngeal papillomas has what is known as ‘papillomatosis’.

What causes laryngeal papilloma?

Laryngeal papillomas are caused by a virus, which most people are exposed to, but in a small number causes this condition. It is possible there is a hormonal influence as they sometimes stop during hormonal change, such as during puberty, pregnancy or menopause.

How might my voice be affected?

To work best, your voice requires your two vocal cords in your larynx (voice box) to move together and vibrate. Papilloma growths over the vocal cords can prevent them coming together with close contact and therefore cause the voice to sound hoarse. Sometimes, people attempt to compensate for the hoarseness by “forcing” their voice, which can lead to further voice difficulties. In advanced cases, the growths may cause difficulty in breathing by obstructing the airway.

What treatment is available?

Diagnosis is made and treatment is recommended by an ear, nose and throat specialist. The primary treatment for papillomatosis is surgery. The operation is usually performed as a day case procedure in hospital. The recovery period is just a few days and the voice is usually much improved very soon after. Repeat surgery may be required, given that papilloma often return again and again.

How speech and language therapy can help

Voice therapy, provided by a specialist speech and language therapist, is recommended in addition to the surgery. Your speech and language therapist can advise on laryngeal health and help you to use your voice in a way that avoids excessive strain. Hoarseness tends to resolve quickly following surgical treatment but may persist if damaging behaviours, such as vocal strain or smoking, are occurring. Voice therapy is usually offered over a course of several sessions, but therapy programmes are tailored to individual requirements.

Contact us

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

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

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Next review due: March 2026