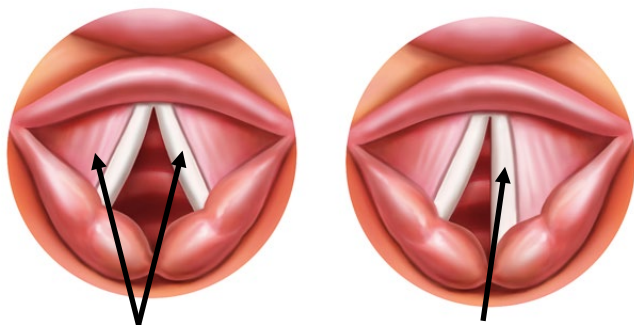


# Vocal cord palsy

This leaflet has been written to try to help you understand some of the symptoms you have been experiencing, and answer some of the questions that you may have about your voice problems.

## What is vocal cord palsy?

Vocal cord palsy is a reduced ability to move the vocal cords. Vocal cords can be partially or completely paralysed. Often the vocal cord palsy will affect one of the vocal cords in the larynx. Sometimes however, both sides will be affected.



Normal vocal cords

One-sided paralysis

## What are the causes of vocal cord palsy?

Vocal cord palsy may result from:

- A viral infection.
- Stroke.
- Trauma to the head.
- Damage to the nerves and muscles that operate the vocal cords. This could be following surgery to the thyroid, larynx (voice box) or throat.
- Occasionally, no known cause can be found.

## What are the symptoms of vocal cord palsy?

The symptoms and their severity depend on whether one or both of the vocal cords are affected, and the position that they are in.

### Changes to your voice:

- Your voice may sound breathy and weak.
- The tone of your voice may become variable.
- The loudness of your voice may decrease.
- You may find it difficult to make yourself heard in a noisy environment.
- If both vocal cords are affected you may lose your voice.

### **Other symptoms:**

- You may experience difficulty swallowing
- You may feel breathless and have noisy breathing

### **How will my diagnosis be confirmed?**

You will be seen by a member of the Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) team, who will examine you and look at how the vocal cords are working. A speech and language therapist may also be present to assist in the diagnosis.

### **What treatment is available for vocal cord palsy?**

Some vocal cord palsies will recover by themselves over a period of months. However, the palsy may be permanent.

Voice therapy and surgery are the two common treatment options.

Your ENT doctor and speech and language therapist will be able to give you advice on the best options for you.

### **What can I do to help my symptoms?**

Following any exercises and advice given by the ENT team or your speech and language therapist is very important and will help your symptoms improve.

It is important to tell your doctor if you are experiencing breathing and swallowing difficulties so they can advise you on treatment options.

If you have any other questions about the vocal cord palsy, please contact your speech and language therapist.

### **Contact us**

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

RBFT Speech and Language Therapy, July 2023

Next review due: July 2025