

Voice Care for Children

Dysphonia is the medical term to describe a change in the quality of your child's voice. The voice may sound raspy or hoarse, weak or breathy, squeaky, strained, or higher/lower pitched. The larynx or "voice box" contains the vocal cords which are muscles that move and vibrate to produce vocal sounds. The voice box is just above the windpipe. Any irritation, infection, trauma, or bumps of the vocal cords can change the way they vibrate and move and change the quality of the voice.

Causes of dysphonia (hoarseness):

- Irritation and inflammation of the vocal cords:
 - Gastroesophageal reflux (GERD):
 - acid coming up from the swallowing tube can irritate the vocal cords
 - Sickness/Upper Respiratory Infection/Allergies:
 - Increased mucous dripping from the nose/throat can irritate the vocal cords
 - Smoking/exposure to second hand smoke
- Nodules of vocal cords:
 - Small lumps develop on cords that can disrupt vibration and closure of cords
- Vocal Cord Paralysis:
 - 1 or both Vocal cords cannot move due to a problem with the nerve of the cords

Evaluation of the voice box:

Video endoscopy of the vocal cords can be performed during your office visit. This will allow your ENT specialist to examine the throat, including the vocal cords, to figure out what is causing the hoarseness. The video will be reviewed with you as well.

Treatment for vocal cord disorders and hoarseness:

- Voice evaluation and therapy:
 - A voice evaluation and voice therapy may help your child to learn proper voicing techniques and help control behaviors that could be contributing to the hoarseness
- Reflux management to control acid exposure of the voice box through healthy diet, lifestyle changes, or medication (see our **reflux diet recommendations and precautions** sheet)
- Drinking plenty of water will help the vocal cords to vibrate more easily
- 30 minutes of voice rest every day - this includes no singing or whispering!



Tips for healthy voice box and vocal cords:

- Voice rest of at least 30 minutes per day – no talking, whispering, or singing
- Drinking plenty of water daily to keep cords moist and prevent dryness to help them vibrate more easily
- Avoid caffeine, fizzy, and fruity/acidic drinks- can dry the throat and thicken mucous

Habits to avoid straining the voice and vocal cords:

- Whispering
- Coughing and throat clearing
- Shouting and screaming
- Too much singing or humming
- Overuse of voice

