

Patient information

Presbyphonia

Presbyphonia is a term used to describe the age related changes that can affect an individuals' voice. As we age, the acoustic characteristics of our voice changes. Muscles can decline in strength and elasticity can be lost (age related muscle atrophy), this can cause the vocal cords to bow and therefore cause changes to the voice.

This can be dependent on the chronological age of the individual and the demands made on the voice. Voice problems may be more apparent when attempting to sing, exerting the voice or especially in professional voice users.

Symptoms

People with presbyphonia may experience some of the following symptoms:

- Less efficient speech: this may present as shaky, squeaky, weak, rough and hoarse. But it can vary from one person to another
- Speech may sound rushed and breathy
- Reduced control over the voice: pitch, range and volume may appear reduced and voice quality may appear generally deteriorated
- Occasional or frequent breaks in their pitch
- Laryngeal tension
- Speech may worsen towards the end of the day
- Unable to sustain adequate volume in a noisy environment
- Vocal cord can swell (oedema) and cause the pitch to drop

Symptom severity can vary from person to person.

Treatment / therapy

The overall aim of therapy is to improve the quality of the individuals' voice and for their voice to become optimum.

With therapy, the hope is to improve muscle strengthening, increasing good vocal behaviours and increasing confidence in vocal ability. This is done through:

- Promoting good vocal health and hygiene
- Reducing vocal abuse (e.g. reducing coughing and throat clearing)
- Vocal warm up exercises
- Decreasing tension in the larynx, around the neck and in the shoulders
- Increasing speaking volume/projection
- Relaxation
- Breathing exercises to improve breath support

****If you are noticing any soreness or discomfort of the vocal tract after a practice session, you are attempting the tasks with too much force.**

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<https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>

