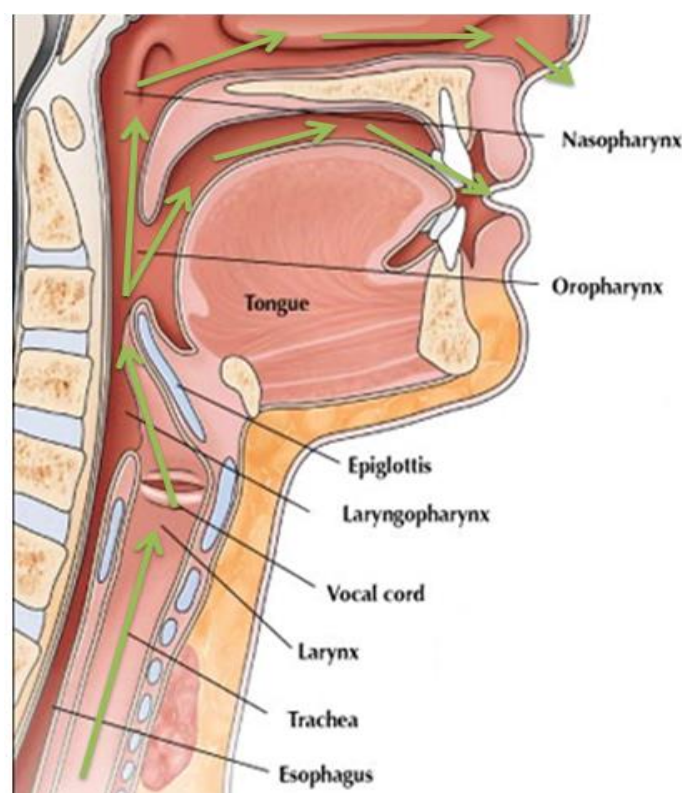


Patient information

How do we produce voice?

Our voices are generated by air from the lungs.

- First, we breathe air in, filling the chest from deep in the abdomen, upwards.
- As we breathe out, air flows from the lungs, through the trachea, and the vocal tract.
- As air passes through the vocal tract, it passes through the larynx, where the vocal cords are.
- This causes the vocal cords to vibrate. These vibrations cause a sound wave which we hear as VOICE.
- This vibrating column of air then reaches the oral cavity, where it is shaped into speech sounds, by the lips, teeth, tongue and jaw.
- The spaces of the throat, mouth, nose and chest modify and resonate the sound produced by the vocal cords. We are all different in shape and size, so our voices resonate differently and we each have our own individual, recognisable voice.



Our voice relies on a healthy larynx (muscles and cartilages of the throat), and a good breath supply, easily controlled from the centre of the body. It is important that we have a relaxed body and posture, free from tension which may interrupt the air flow or constrict the throat. If you are feeling unwell or poorly, your voice may not sound as good as it usually does - bare this in mind, and give yourself

time to recover.

Looking after your voice:

To improve your voice, you may need to reduce behaviours which lead to vocal abuse/misuse. It is important to allow the vocal cords to heal, reducing any inflammation, redness or thickening. These changes can help to protect your voice and reduce further damage.

To do this, it is important to use an 'easy, relaxed' voice, without any extra effort or strain. Using a quieter, breathier voice in the short term, can help your vocal cords to heal.

Using a breathy voice maintains a slight gap between the vocal cords, even when they are coming together to vibrate. This means they come together more gently, allowing them to heal and producing a better voice in the long term.

To help your vocal cords to heal, try to follow some of the following advice:

Do's

- Drink plenty of water, squash or herbal tea at regular intervals to hydrate the vocal tract - aim for 4 pints (2 litres) daily
- Use steam inhalation - no menthol
- Moisten the atmosphere - put bowls of water above radiators if able to
- Use spacers and mouth rinsing if using inhalers
- Talk in a gentle, quiet voice
- Rest your voice for 30 minutes to an hour, regularly
- Follow reflux management advice
- Yawn! Helps to relax your throat

Don'ts

- Raise your voice over background noise – this can cause damage
- Shout or scream - can cause damage
- Sing without a full voice warm-up
- Whisper - can strain your voice
- Have lengthy telephone conversations
- Smoke - dries and irritates the vocal tract
- Have many caffeinated drinks (eg coffee/tea/cola) or alcohol - can dehydrate the vocal cords
- Have very hot, very cold and very spicy foods - can irritate the vocal tract
- Throat clear or cough: sip water, swallow hard, yawn, or silently huff instead

- Try to relax. The muscles which hold the vocal cords are greatly affected by emotional stress and tension - trying to relax them can improve your voice
- Be aware of medications which can dry the vocal cords
- Suck throat lozenges - can numb the throat
- Be in dusty or dry environments - use a mask where appropriate and keep hydrated

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (formerly DisabledGo)
<https://www.accessable.co.uk>



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