

## PATIENT INFORMATION

### Voice Rest

**Voice rest is very important after vocal fold surgery. Your vocal folds *will not* heal properly if they are overused during this time. If you use your voice a lot at work we recommend you take two weeks off to give yourself time to rest and heal.**

#### **Immediately after surgery (first 72 hours):**

- Do not talk or whisper, laugh out loud, sing, cough or clear your throat. Use a notepad and a pen to communicate during this time.
- Drink plenty of fluids, avoiding caffeinated or alcoholic drinks which dry out your vocal folds.
- Do not smoke. Avoid smoky atmospheres.
- Do not answer the telephone; ask people to text or email instead.
- Avoid heavy lifting, pushing and pulling including gym and aerobic activity.
- Follow your reflux management guidelines as normal.
- After 48 hours use steam inhalations (especially if your throat feels dry). Breathe in the steam for 5 minutes 4-5 times a day. Use hot water rather than boiling to avoid scalding.
- Avoid playing wind or brass instruments (the blowing technique can result in forceful vocal fold contact).

#### **After 72 hours:**

- Speak no louder than a soft conversational volume.
- Speak less often than usual and gradually increase the amount that you use your voice each day (initially about 10% of normal).
- Do not shout, clear your throat, cough unnecessarily, laugh loudly, whisper, raise your voice or sing.
- Try to avoid using the phone and if you do keep the conversation short.
- Try to have periods of voice rest between speaking.
- Keep drinking lots of fluid and inhaling steam twice a day.
- Continue following your reflux management guidelines.
- Take time to relax each day.

**If you have exercises from your voice therapist you can start practicing them again on day 5 post surgery for 1 -2 minutes at a time.**

**After 2 weeks:**

- Talk about 50% of normal.
- Continue to avoid shouting, clearing your throat, coughing, whispering and laughing loudly.
- Continue to practice any exercises that your therapist has given you.
- If you are a singer you can now start to practice some gentle pitch glides - ask your voice therapist to suggest appropriate exercises.
- If you are a singer remember that your voice use is cumulative and the amount you use your voice overall includes your speaking and singing.
- Aim to schedule your voice use and vocal practice into several short sessions scattered throughout the day.

**After 3 weeks:**

- Increase voice use to about 75% of normal.
- If you are a singer you can now start singing again within a comfortable volume and pitch range (you should not attempt to produce your performance sound quality at this stage).
- Continue to practice frequently in short regular sessions.
- Continue to follow your voice care advice.

**After 4 weeks:**

- Return to normal vocal activities whilst taking care to avoid any of the vocal behaviours that may have contributed to your initial voice problem.
- If you are a singer it is a good idea to work with an appropriately trained singing teacher to help you with any compensatory mechanisms that you may have developed as a result of singing with a compromised larynx.

**After 6 weeks:**

You should now be feeling back to normal. Please do contact your voice therapist or ENT Consultant if you are continuing to experience problems. If you are a singer you should now be able to go back to performing.

**If you need further advice during this period please contact the  
Voice Team in the Speech and Language Therapy Department on  
01803 654948/01626 324542**

**Email – [slt.sdhct@nhs.net](mailto:slt.sdhct@nhs.net)**

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For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.