

Help is at Hand

- If you are experiencing the symptoms described above do not ignore them. Remember that the development of vocal nodules is an ongoing process. The sooner it is treated the better the result.
- Seek a medical opinion from a Laryngologist experienced with voice problems. The best solution is to ask your GP for a referral to a multi-disciplinary voice clinic. You will find a list of voice clinics on the British Voice Association's website at www.britishvoiceassociation.org.uk
- Whenever possible rest your voice and avoid speaking against noise, shouting or coughing violently.
- Inhale steam to soothe irritated and swollen vocal folds.
- Keep well hydrated and avoid inhaled irritants, such as smoke.
- If you are a singer discuss suitable warm up exercises with your singing teacher and do not try to sing high and quiet – you will be doomed to disappointment until the nodules have resolved.
- If your Laryngologist refers you to a Speech and Language Therapist take up the option and work hard on the exercises you are given. Voice therapy is like physiotherapy or Pilates for the voice and may well be all you need to resolve the nodules.

- If your Laryngologist suggests surgery, do not panic! It may well be the quickest and most effective way to deal with the problem. Ask your Laryngologist to explain the surgery and why they feel it is the best treatment option. Discuss any worries you have openly.
- Don't beat yourself up about it! Vocal nodules are not a crime nor even necessarily the result of "bad technique". They are an injury, much as a marathon runner might sustain during training or a race.

Vocal nodules are a nuisance, it will require hard work to resolve them. They will almost certainly worry you and may delay your progress but...

VOCAL NODULES ARE NOT LIKELY TO END YOUR CAREER!

For further information about vocal nodules and vocal fold structure see the voice care section at:
www.britishvoiceassociation.org.uk



World Voice Day

The truth about VOCAL NODULES ...the end of your career or just a hiccup?

A diagnosis of vocal nodules often drives fear into the heart of a singer or actor, but is their fearsome reputation justified?



The British Voice Association

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This information is designed for adults, particularly performers. The problems of children with vocal nodules will be addressed in a future information sheet on our website.

What are Vocal Nodules?

- Vocal nodules develop as a result of repeated trauma to the vocal folds.
- Small swellings develop at the site of the trauma which are usually known as “soft nodules” They interfere with the closure and vibration of the vocal folds causing hoarseness.
- If soft nodules are ignored, persistent damage may begin to produce fibrous scar tissue. When this happens they are often referred to as “hard nodules”.
- Soft nodules are usually treated successfully with voice therapy and good voice care. Hard nodules respond less well to voice therapy and usually require surgery.

The Secret is in the Structure

- The layered structure of the vocal folds is an important key to understanding treatment outcomes and how different conditions affect the voice.
- Vocal nodules can be successfully treated because they normally only affect the outer covering of the vocal fold.

Conservative Treatment

- Voice rest is important in the acute stage and often early nodules will resolve in 7-10 days or so with rest and good voice use. More than this is rarely necessary.
- Following a period of rest it is important to use your voice normally again to keep the muscles strong and shake any vocal stiffness loose. You will need guidance with exercises from your Speech Therapist and Singing Teacher.
- Speech Therapy will provide carefully targeted exercises to ensure your voice is used efficiently in speaking and advice on voice care.
- If you are a singer your singing teacher needs to check your singing technique is efficient.

Normal vocal folds voicing



Surgery now and then

- In the past surgical outcomes for vocal nodules were often poor, giving nodules the reputation of being a career killer.
- Since the importance of the vocal fold structure has been understood surgical techniques have changed considerably.
- The surgical techniques of today allow vocal nodules to be removed safely and effectively.

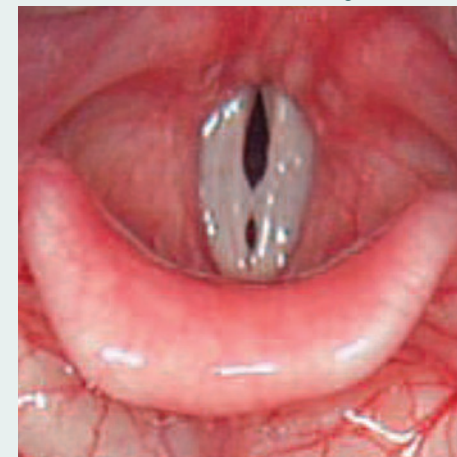
When is a Nodule not a Nodule?

- Sometimes other conditions have a similar appearance to nodules and may make diagnosis more difficult.
- Assessment in a voice clinic with stroboscopy may be necessary to differentiate these from simple vocal nodules.
- Some other conditions respond less well to voice therapy and may require more complex surgery to resolve them.
- Terminology used to describe vocal fold swellings often varies between clinicians and may be confusing. You can always ask your surgeon for clarification if you are unsure of your diagnosis.

Signs and Symptoms

- Initially the voice may become “cloudy” (minimally husky) and less responsive over a certain pitch range, losing clarity and brightness.
- The voice is slow to warm up and may sound deeper, breathy and weak, particularly over the upper pitch range.
- Over time the speaking voice may become noticeably hoarse and breathy.
- The voice may start to “cut out”, around certain notes, giving characteristic “voice breaks” which are most obvious when the voice is used quietly.

Vocal folds with nodules voicing



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