



Disclaimer: This leaflet provides general information and should not be used as a substitute for professional medical advice. It is essential to consult with a qualified healthcare professional for any health concerns or before making any decisions related to your health or treatment.

Overview

This leaflet provides information and exercises to help manage your vocal cord nodules. Vocal cord nodules are small, benign growths on your vocal cords, often caused by voice overuse or misuse. They can make your voice sound hoarse, breathy, or strained. These exercises, combined with good vocal hygiene practices, can help improve your voice quality and reduce nodule size.

Understanding Vocal Cord Nodules

Your vocal cords are two folds of mucous membrane that vibrate to produce sound. When you overuse or misuse your voice, these folds can collide forcefully, leading to irritation and the formation of nodules. Think of them like calluses that develop on your hands after repeated friction.

Symptoms of Vocal Cord Nodules

Common symptoms include:

- Hoarseness
- Breathiness
- A strained or rough voice
- A lower pitch than usual
- Vocal fatigue
- A feeling of a lump in your throat
- Pain or discomfort in your throat, especially when speaking

How Voice Exercises Help

Voice exercises aim to improve vocal cord function by:

- Reducing tension in the larynx (voice box) and surrounding muscles
- Improving breath control and support for voice production
- Promoting gentle and efficient vocal cord vibration
- Strengthening laryngeal muscles

Important Considerations

- **Consistency is key:** Perform these exercises regularly, as instructed by your Speech and Language Therapist (SLT).
- **Listen to your body:** If you experience any pain or discomfort during the exercises, stop immediately and consult your SLT.
- **Hydration:** Drink plenty of water throughout the day to keep your vocal cords lubricated.
- **Vocal rest:** Avoid excessive voice use, especially shouting, whispering, and prolonged talking, to allow your vocal cords to heal.
- **Avoid irritants:** Minimise exposure to smoke, dust, and other airborne irritants.
- **Manage reflux:** If you experience acid reflux, follow medical advice to manage it, as reflux can irritate the vocal cords.

Warm-up Exercises

Before starting the main voice exercises, it's important to warm up your vocal cords. These warm-ups help prepare your voice for more demanding exercises and reduce the risk of strain.

1. **Gentle Humming:** Hum softly on a comfortable pitch for 30 seconds. Gradually glide your pitch up and down within a comfortable range.

2. **Lip Trills:** Gently blow air through your lips, causing them to vibrate. Maintain a steady airflow and a relaxed throat. Start on a comfortable pitch and gradually glide your pitch up and down.
3. **Tongue Trills:** Trill your tongue against the roof of your mouth, starting on a comfortable pitch and gradually gliding up and down.
4. **Yawning and Sighing:** Yawn gently and then sigh softly on a descending pitch. This helps relax the throat and larynx.
5. **Chewing:** Chew with exaggerated movements of your lips and jaw, first silently and then with voice, for 30 seconds each. This helps relax the jaw and facial muscles.

Breathing Exercises

Proper breathing is essential for good voice production. These exercises help improve breath control and support.

1. **Diaphragmatic Breathing:** Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor. Place one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach. Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose, feeling your stomach rise while your chest remains relatively still. Exhale slowly through your mouth, feeling your stomach fall.
2. **Sustained Phonation:** Inhale deeply using diaphragmatic breathing and then sustain a vowel sound (e.g., "ah," "ee," "oo") for as long as you can comfortably hold the note. Focus on maintaining a steady airflow and a relaxed throat.
3. **Chanting:** Chant a series of vowel sounds on one breath, using diaphragmatic breathing. For example, chant "ah-ee-oo-ah-ee-oo" on a single breath.

Voice Strengthening Exercises

These exercises help strengthen the laryngeal muscles and improve vocal cord vibration.

1. **Easy Onsets:** Start with a gentle hum and then transition smoothly into a vowel sound. Avoid any harsh or abrupt starts to the sound. For example, hum softly and then transition into "hello."
2. **Pitch Glides:** Glide your voice smoothly up and down a comfortable pitch range, using a vowel sound or a hum.
3. **Volume Variations:** Sustain a vowel sound or a hum, gradually increasing and decreasing the volume while maintaining a steady airflow and a relaxed throat.
4. **Tongue and Lip Exercises:** Practice tongue and lip exercises to improve articulation and coordination. For example, repeat tongue twisters or practice saying different vowel and consonant combinations.

Cool-down Exercises

After completing the voice exercises, cool down your vocal cords with gentle humming or lip trills on a comfortable pitch.

Monitoring Your Progress

Keep a voice journal to track your progress. Note any changes in your voice quality, vocal fatigue, and any discomfort you experience. Share this information with your SLT to adjust your exercise program as needed.

Seeking Professional Help

It is crucial to work closely with an SLT for the diagnosis and management of vocal cord nodules. They will assess your voice, provide personalized exercise recommendations, and monitor your progress. They can also offer advice on vocal hygiene and lifestyle modifications to support your recovery.