



VOCAL CORD NODULES

Information for Parents and Therapists

What are Vocal Cord Nodules?

Nodules, or nodes, are callous-like bumps on the vocal cords. You might suspect vocal cord nodules have developed if your child speaks in a low, rough, hoarse, raspy voice, loses his/her voice, or coughs or clears the throat often.

Who diagnoses nodules?

An Otolaryngologist (ENT) determines the presence of nodules by viewing the cords' movement while vocalizing ("eee") or breathing.

How do nodules develop?

Nodules may occur from the following factors:

- **Vocally-abusive behaviors:** coughing, throat clearing, yelling, talking too much, "performing" voice which is too loud or not in a person's optimum vocal output/range.
- **Inadequate Breath Support:** Breathing provides air, which passes over the vocal cords to help them vibrate. If one does not have adequate breath support, the vocal cords will work harder which may result in vocal misuse.
*Breathing is like the gas we need to keep our car going. It's not the only part of the car that makes it go, but being out means the car will **not** keep running!
- **Lifestyle/Personality factors:** loud, socially outgoing, talkative, aggressive, dramatic people who talk or use their voices in noisy or smoky environments.

Do they go away on their own?

Nodules typically do not go away without intervention. Some decisions and corresponding action will need to be taken by the patient, family, speech-language pathologist specializing in voice, and other support systems in the child's environment (classroom teachers, sports coaches, theater/singing teachers).

Families should know that voice quality, loudness, and clarity may deteriorate with untreated nodules. Respiration may become less comfortable; many people report feeling a lump in the throat, which may contribute to perceived need to clear the throat or cough. Some persons with nodules may lose their voice or become more hoarse after periods of extended/intensive voice use.

What do we do now?

Once a patient and family decide to enroll in therapy, specific behaviors observed during evaluation are identified as treatment goals. Patients may sign a "contract of voice use rules" to encourage healthy voice use or eliminate potentially damaging vocal behaviors. Continued monitoring by medical professionals and family input are necessary for measuring treatment success.