



Let's Talk

Voice Problems and Your Child

“My son Jeremy is very active and talks all the time. He is the loudest kid on the playground. His teachers are always trying to get him to be quiet. Lately his voice sounds different. He sounds hoarse most of the time, and he lost his voice after going to a basketball game. I'm worried that he's hurting his voice with all that yelling.”

—Marty

Did Your Doctor Tell You That Your Child Has Vocal Nodules?

You may have been told that your child has vocal nodules. Your doctor may have sent you to a speech-language pathologist, or SLP, for speech treatment. If so, you may have questions about what is happening to your child's voice.

What Are Vocal Nodules?

Nodules are growths on the vocal cords in your throat. They are benign, meaning they are not cancer. They are like a callus that you might get on your hand or foot.

Some signs of vocal nodules are if you:

- Have a hoarse, breathy, or scratchy voice
- Have difficulty whispering
- Have a feeling like a “lump in the throat” that makes you want to clear your throat a lot
- Lose your voice easily
- Feel tired because of how hard it is to talk
- Have trouble hitting high notes when singing

Fast facts

- Speaking a lot or very loudly may cause vocal nodules, especially if your child has a cold, allergies, or acid reflux.
- See your doctor if your child's voice is hoarse or scratchy for more than 2 weeks.
- A speech-language pathologist, or SLP, can help your child's voice get better.

Why Did This Happen?

You have a pair of vocal cords in your voice box, which is known as the larynx (LAIR-inx). The vocal cords help you to produce sounds to speak. When you talk, the cords close together and vibrate. Voice problems can happen if you strain your voice. This can happen when you close them together too hard or for too long. The cords can swell and cause vocal nodules. Nodules are usually on both vocal cords.

Other reasons for voice problems include:

- Talking and yelling too much
- Using your voice in the wrong way (talking with too high a pitch or whispering)
- Allergies or irritations in the throat, like from acid reflux

How Can an SLP Help?

SLPs work with people who have voice problems. SLPs work in schools, hospitals, and clinics, and can even come to your home.

The SLP may evaluate your child at the same time as the doctor, or during a different appointment. The SLP wants to find out:

- How your child uses her voice during the day
- What other things, like noise, pollution, acid reflux, and allergies, affect her voice
- What her voice sounds like when she is doing different things

The SLP may use special equipment to record and analyze your child's voice.

Will Treatment Make A Difference?

The SLP will work with your child on how to use his voice to stop doing the things that hurt his voice. Your child will work on things at home, work, or school such as:

- Finding his best voice—using good breathing, posture, and the right tone
- Learning a safe way to use his voice loudly without straining



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- Avoiding things that might be harmful, like making animal noises, or clearing his throat
- Avoiding places or situations that strain his voice
- Caring for his voice by drinking water and using a humidifier

You and your family can help your child remember to use good voice habits and avoid the bad ones. Your child’s teachers can also remind him about good voice habits.

“Jeremy saw an ear, nose, and throat doctor, or ENT. He told us Jeremy had swelling on his vocal cords that could turn into nodules. We took Jeremy to an SLP to learn how to use his voice better. She gave us tips about how to remind Jeremy when he starts to talk too loud. We helped him to use these tips. When the ENT checked him again, the swelling had gone away, and he did not develop nodules.”

—Marty

Voice problems can change your child’s life. Help is available.

To learn more about vocal nodules or to find an SLP near you who has been certified by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), visit www.asha.org or call 800-638-8255 or (TTY) 301-296-5650.

My SLP’s name is

Appointment

Compliments of
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)
and