

PATIENT INFORMATION**Voice care during radiotherapy**

When undergoing radiotherapy treatment, the tissues around your throat and larynx (voice box) can be sensitive, dry and sore. Your voice is likely to sound hoarse. Recovery from one person to another depends on the amount and extent of treatment. The following tips may help your voice and its recovery.

Hydration and irritants

You may experience a very dry mouth as one of the side effects of your radiotherapy. This can cause talking to be uncomfortable. To keep your mouth and voice hydrated, it is important to have small sips of water regularly. Try to reduce your intake of alcohol, caffeinated or fizzy drinks as these can irritate your voice. You can also talk to your treatment team who may be able to prescribe you some dry mouth spray.



Steaming



Breathing in steam is another way to hydrate and soothe your voice box. The steam hydrates your vocal cords, reduces swelling and irritation and helps to break up any thick, sticky secretions in your throat. You can try this at home by breathing in the steam rising from warm water in a bowl or your treatment team may be able to provide you with a nebuliser.

Avoid any dry, dusty or smoky environments

They can irritate and dry the tissues of the vocal tract on inhalation and exhalation. Long term exposure can cause your throat to become dry and inflamed which will make it more for you to use your voice.



Pain relief



Make sure you are taking pain relief if your throat is sore. Discuss the best type of pain relief for you with your medical team. Following these recommendations should also help to reduce stress and pain in your throat.

Reflux

If you are experiencing reflux (heartburn), speak to your medical team so that they can help you with this. If your throat is exposed to reflux acid for a long period of time it can cause pain, inflammation and redness.



Using your voice

Try not to strain your voice when you speak. Whispering or holding tension in your throat can cause you to strain your voice and damage your muscles. Try speaking softly and quietly instead of whispering and make sure you are talking in a quiet area where possible to prevent you from having to raise your voice.



If you work in a noisy environment or your job requires you to use a louder voice, an amplifier may help. Speak with your speech and language therapist to discuss your options.

Stress, anxiety and your breathing

Stress can worsen your voice due to tensing and tightening of muscles. Gently move your shoulders, neck and jaw muscles to reduce any tension.

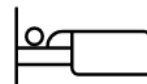


Breath is the power source of your voice. Therefore, making sure you're breathing into the full space of your lungs will support your voice. To fill your lungs you need to engage your diaphragm, a dome shaped muscle situated under your lungs. Place one hand on your chest and the other hand on your upper stomach, on breathing in you should feel the hand on your stomach move inwards. On breathing out you should feel the hand on the stomach move outwards, the hand on your chest should remain mostly still.

Keeping good posture may also help you when using your voice.

Vocal naps

If your voice is feeling tired, have a period without using it to allow it to rest. You could try reading a book or watching tv in silence. You could also use other methods to communicate e.g., texting or writing things down to give your voice a break.



If you have any questions about caring for your voice, **please contact the Head and Neck Speech and Language Therapy team.**

If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything, please call your GP, 111, or 999.

Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that you may need to leave a voicemail message, but we aim to return your call within one working day.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.