



## **Symptom Management: Hoarseness of Voice**

Some people with lung cancer can present with or develop a hoarse voice. This can be an irritating symptom; it can be very tiring to talk, as it takes a lot of effort to be heard and understood, particularly over the phone.

### **Causes**

Often this is not a serious problem and may be caused by compression of the tumour on a nerve in the chest called the laryngeal nerve. If this nerve is squashed one of the vocal cords in your throat can become paralysed, leading to a hoarse voice.

If the vocal cord is not working properly, patients may also find it more difficult to swallow effectively and there is a risk that food and drink could be inhaled into the lungs.

Occasionally a hoarse voice may be caused by oral thrush (Candida).

### **Management**

- The hoarseness of voice should be fully assessed by a member of your lung cancer team
- If there is any infection in the mouth, this should be treated first
- Sometimes if the tumour reduces in size the pressure on the nerve may be released; therefore treatments such as steroids, radiotherapy and chemotherapy can be used if appropriate
- In some cases it may be useful to ask for an assessment by the ear nose and throat team, to see if any intervention such as vocal cord injections would be helpful
- Referral to the speech and language therapy team may be needed to assess the swallowing

Source: National Lung Cancer Forum For Nurses

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