



Surrey Voice Clinic

It is more than just your voice.

What are laryngeal airway disorders?

Laryngeal airway disorders include chronic throat clearing, chronic cough, and/or breathing attacks known as Paradoxical Vocal Fold Motion, Exercise Induced Laryngeal Obstruction (EILO), and airway reactions related to multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS). You may have heard the term “irritable larynx” mentioned alongside some of these symptoms.

How are laryngeal airway problems diagnosed?

Medical evaluation and treatment is recommended as the first step for any laryngeal airway symptoms. All possible causes of laryngeal airway disorders should be ruled out or managed by your healthcare providers.

When treatments have been tried and symptoms persist, evaluation and treatment by a qualified speech-language pathologist may be appropriate.

What are some other causes of laryngeal airway disorders that can be treated medically?

Asthma, allergies, reflux disease, post nasal drip, cardiac disease, and lung disease or other airway damage are the most common treatable causes of laryngeal airway disorders. There are other medical causes of airway issues that can be triaged, evaluated, and treated by your doctor and specialists.

What is Paradoxical Vocal Fold Motion (PVFM)/Exercise Induced Laryngeal Obstruction (EILO)?

PVFM/EILO is a functional disorder most commonly characterized by a breathing attack including tightness in the throat and trouble breathing in. These type of attacks usually are in response to a specific trigger, such as reflux, exercise, airborne irritants. These types of breathing attacks most commonly occur and resolve quickly (within 20 minutes).

What is the difference between asthma and PVFM?

The primary difference is that asthma is trouble breathing **out** and PVFM is trouble breathing **in**.

How can a speech-language pathologist help me if I have laryngeal airway concerns but not a speech problem?

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It is more than just your voice.

A qualified and experienced speech-language pathologist with the skills and experience needed in laryngeal airway disorders will guide you through breathing exercises and self-awareness tasks designed to eliminate the breathing attacks.

How is PVFM/EILO diagnosed?

PVFM/EILO is diagnosed after all medical evaluation and treatment has been completed and laryngeal airway symptoms persist. Your description of your breathing attacks, triggers, and previous treatment help to narrow down the diagnosis. Visualization of your larynx also provides valuable information towards diagnosis and also helps with treatment.

How is PVFM/EILO treated?

PVFM/EILO is treated with behavioural therapy targeted towards improving breathing patterns and ability to keep air moving through an open airway. Breathing exercises, self awareness, journaling, and observation will be discussed and trained. The goal is to eliminate the breathing attacks.

I am an elite athlete with breathing attacks. Is anything different about evaluation and treatment?

Evaluation and treatment will be the same and directed towards your specific symptoms. The goal for athletes is to get back in the game and maintain a high level of competition. On-site visits by your speech-language pathologist will help transition basic breathing exercises to your level of activity and your sport. Your coach may be an important team member as well.

Questions about evaluation or treatment of Laryngeal Airway Disorders?

Please contact us for more information.

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