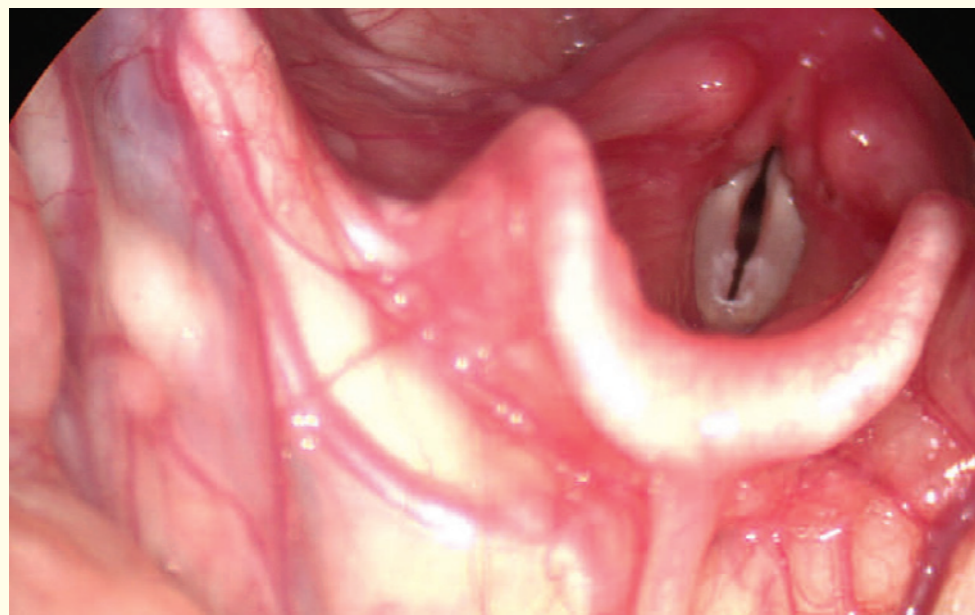


WHAT HAPPENS IF THE VOCAL NODULES ARE HARD?

- Sometimes vocal nodules in children become hard and fibrous and voice therapy is unable to resolve the voice problem fully. Surgery may be the answer but this will need to be discussed with your ENT Surgeon and Speech and Language Therapist.
- Many surgeons prefer not to operate on the vocal folds of children because the layered structure of the vocal fold does not develop fully until around adolescence and scarring may be more likely (see *"the secret is in the structure"* section on vocal nodules in adults). Nodules are also likely to recur if the child is unable to improve their vocal habits.
- Remember, vocal nodules are not a danger to your child's health and it is safe to monitor them until either they resolve or your child is mature enough to benefit from surgery.

Vocal fold nodules in a child.



HELP IS AT HAND...

If your child develops vocal nodules:

- Ask your GP for a referral to a multidisciplinary voice clinic. A list of UK voice clinics is available to download from the BVA website.
- Whenever possible make sure your child has some quiet time/activities in the day to rest their voices.
- Keep your child well hydrated and away from inhaled irritants, such as smoke, and try to reduce the need for them to speak against noise or shout.
- Coughing is often reduced by steam inhalations. They also soothe irritated and swollen vocal folds but your child must be supervised when doing this.
- If your child is a singer discuss suitable warm up exercises with his/her singing teacher.
- If your ENT surgeon refers your child to a Speech and Language Therapist take up the option. It may be all your child needs to resolve the nodules.
- If your child has made many positive changes to their voice use but the voice problem does not improve, then surgery to remove the nodules may be a positive option. Discuss this with your child's ENT Surgeon and Speech and Language Therapist so that you can plan voice care after surgery carefully.
- Don't blame yourself or your child. Vocal nodules are not a crime just an injury that can happen, much as a child can get from playing sports or falling in the playground.



330 Grays' Inn Road, London WC1X 8EE
Tel: +44 (0)20 7713 0064 Fax: +44 (0)20 7915 1388
email: administrator@britishvoiceassociation.org.uk

www.britishvoiceassociation.org.uk

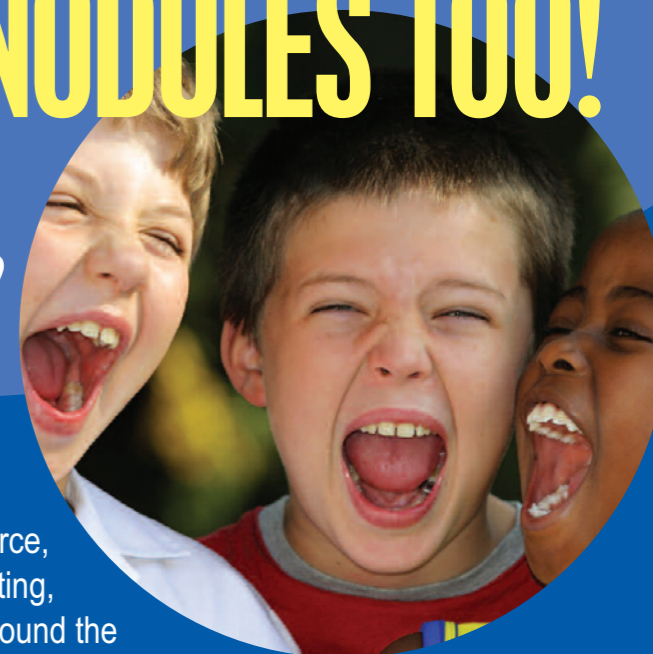
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CHILDREN GET VOCAL NODULES TOO!

WHAT ARE VOCAL NODULES?

- Vocal nodules develop as the result of **trauma to the vocal folds**. When the vocal folds collide with too much force, for example when shouting, swelling can develop around the site of the collision. These small swellings are often referred to as **"soft nodules"**.
- A single episode of trauma usually recovers with several days of voice rest, but if the episodes are repeated the swelling may become more persistent and require treatment. Voice changes such as hoarseness, discomfort and tiring of the voice are frequently associated with the presence of nodules.
- If soft nodules and the associated voice changes are ignored and allowed to progress, fibrous scar tissue can develop. When this happens we refer to **"hard nodules"**.
- Hard nodules are more difficult to treat as the voice problem may not resolve fully with voice therapy and in a few cases surgery may be required to restore the voice.



CAN CHILDREN GET VOCAL NODULES?

- Vocal nodules are a common cause of hoarseness in children and adults. However, it is important to remember that other things can cause voice problems too.
- Most voice problems in children are related to an infection (laryngitis) and usually the voice returns to normal within two weeks.
- If your child's voice does not return to normal after two weeks you are advised to consult your GP who can refer your child to an ENT surgeon or better still, a voice clinic.
- The ENT surgeon/Voice clinic can examine your child's vocal folds. He/she will also be able to check your child's ears and nose for any associated problems e.g. allergies and hearing loss and look at the way your child uses their voice.
- The ENT Surgeon can then make a proper diagnosis of the problem. Once vocal nodules have been confirmed, the ENT surgeon and Speech and Language Therapist will help you plan the most effective treatment for your child.

INVESTIGATE BUT DON'T PANIC!

- Hoarseness can develop for many reasons. It is really important to investigate the cause and establish a proper diagnosis so treatment can be provided that is effective and appropriate.
- Sometimes laryngitis (inflammation of the vocal folds) can develop as a result of allergies or from asthma inhalers that are not properly administered. Children can also develop cysts or a small scar known as a sulcus in their vocal folds just as adults can.
- Occasionally more complex problems such as a paralysed vocal fold, or warty growths caused by the human papilloma virus can occur. These voice problems are treated differently which is why a clear diagnosis is important.

TREATMENT TODAY

- Hoarseness that develops after an episode of shouting may resolve with rest alone but if the hoarseness persists treatment is recommended.
- Voice therapy is usually the treatment of first choice. Voice therapy exercises are designed to restore efficient vocal function so that the nodules resolve and most importantly so that the voice problem improves.
- Voice therapy is also likely to involve some behaviour modification around the child's/family's lifestyle. Triggers causing vocal damage need to be identified and ways to minimise or avoid them adopted. It can take time for children to make these changes and patience is required by all involved.
- Parents need to be closely involved in the treatment programme. They can identify activities/behaviours associated with the voice problem, supervise vocal exercises and, if appropriate, carry out a reward scheme to reduce episodes of shouting or vocal strain.
- The teacher and school will need to be involved to continue the treatment programme in school, ensure that the child is included in the usual class activities and prevent possible teasing.



Photo: kzenon and istockphoto.com ©

MY CHILD WON'T DO THE EXERCISES!

- Some children are notoriously unconcerned about whether their voices sound hoarse or may just be too young to take things on board.
- As your child grows and changes, the nodules and voice problem may resolve on their own. If not, treatment can always be carried out later when your child can accept it or is old enough to understand its importance.

KEEPING THINGS "COOL"

- Emotion can be a major factor in the development of voice problems.
- Some children seem particularly susceptible to expressing their upset and frustration through tight and constricted voice use.
- Quarrels and disagreements occur in all families and children wind each other up with the things they do and say. Children also pick up on anxiety and friction between parents or occurring generally in the family.
- These situations affect us all at times. Just be sensitive to your children and try to pick up when they need reassurance and a chance to talk about things.
- Give plenty of warning and talk through big changes that will affect your children, such as moves of house, school, deaths in the family or divorce.
- If you are concerned about your child's emotional state help is available through your GP or local family therapy service.