

VOICE & SWALLOWING

The Nashville ENT Voice & Swallowing Center includes state of the art video equipment to evaluate the function and anatomy of the throat and vocal cords. It is dedicated to the diagnosis and treatment of voice disorders, chronic or recurring vocal problems and swallowing difficulty.

Many problems can affect the voice. Some are temporary while others may be permanent. Infections and reflux can lead to swelling and a voice change. Benign lesions can affect the vocal cords and are often the result of trauma from smoking or overuse of the voice. These include singer's nodules, cysts, polyps, papilloma and granuloma.

Some of these lesions can be managed with voice therapy while others will require surgery. The first step is a thorough evaluation, which includes the use of a small scope to exam the function of the vocal cords. This is done to determine if the problem is with the actual vocal cords or with the nerves or muscles that control them.

The vocal cords are controlled by the superior laryngeal nerves and the recurrent laryngeal nerves. The recurrent laryngeal nerve (RLN) follows a path from the neck to the chest and then back along the trachea to the voice box. As a result, it is at risk during surgery that involves the neck or upper portion of the chest. That includes thyroid and parathyroid surgery, carotid surgery, spine surgery through the neck, cardiac surgery and procedures involving the upper lobes of the lungs.

If hoarseness or swallowing problems occur after surgery in this area and last more than several days, the first step is an evaluation of the vocal cords and their function. With digital scopes and stroboscopy, the Nashville ENT Voice & Swallowing Center provides a thorough and complete approach to allow the best chance for recovery.