



York and Scarborough  
Teaching Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Transoral laser resection of the vocal cords (Steiner technique)

Information for patients, relatives and carers

## Head and Neck Department

① For more information, please contact:

Ear, nose, and throat (ENT)

Telephone: 01904 631313

York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE

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# **Introduction**

We have produced this leaflet to give you general information about transoral laser resection. It will not replace the discussion between you and your healthcare team. If after reading it, you have any concerns or require further explanation, please discuss this with a member of the hospital head and neck team (see useful contact numbers on page 13).

## **What is transoral laser resection?**

Transoral laser resection is a procedure used by a surgeon to remove a small tumour or growth in your voice box (larynx). A specialised carbon dioxide laser beam is used. This procedure preserves the normal tissue and allows careful cutting out (excision) of the tumour. The tumour is then assessed by the pathologist. This procedure is performed through the mouth and throat and does not leave a visible scar. Removal of the tumour will leave a 'raw' area on the vocal cord, which will take time to heal.

## **Why do I need transoral laser resection?**

You may have experienced symptoms that have affected your voice and/or swallowing, and you have undergone a number of investigations. These investigations show that you have a small tumour in your voice box. Following discussion with your ENT surgeon, your surgeon recommends transoral laser resection as a treatment to remove the tumour / growth.

## **What are the benefits of this treatment?**

This surgery allows us to take samples for analysis and remove growths and possible early cancer of the voice box.

## **Can there be any complications or risks?**

Your ENT surgeon will discuss any complications or risks with you, as part of the procedure for informed consent.

Specific risks of this surgery are:

- Damage to lips / teeth / gums / tongue.
- Permanent change in the quality of your voice.
- Temporary swallowing difficulties.
- Rare risk of laser induced fire.

## **Are there any alternative treatments?**

The alternative is radical radiotherapy, which requires multiple daily visits to either Leeds or Hull, over four to six weeks. However, you can only have radiotherapy once. The advantage of using the laser is that it preserves the option of radiotherapy for future use if necessary. In addition, radiotherapy can cause its own side effects, such as throat dryness. If you wish to discuss this further, please talk to your ENT surgeon.

## **How do I prepare for transoral laser resection?**

This information should help you to prepare for the procedure. It may be helpful for you to share the information with your partner and family, so they can support you. There may be information they need to know, especially if they are taking care of you following this procedure.

Before your surgery, a specialist Speech and Language Therapist will assess your voice and swallowing. If you have not yet had this appointment, please contact your ENT surgeon's secretary and we will arrange it.

You will need to attend an appointment at the Pre-Assessment Clinic before your hospital admission. We will give you information about your hospital stay at that appointment.

After your operation, you may need to stay in hospital overnight, so please bring items for an overnight stay, such as nightwear and toiletries.

## **What will happen on the day?**

You will generally be admitted to the ward on the day of your procedure. The procedure will take place in theatre under a general anaesthetic. You will wake up in the recovery area of main theatres. You will be somewhat drowsy initially, but you will soon regain full consciousness. A recovery nurse will look after you, and will make sure you have adequate pain relief, should you need it. It is not generally a particularly painful operation. When the recovery staff are happy with your observations, they will arrange for you to be transferred to the ward.



## **What happens afterwards?**

Following your surgery, the ENT doctors will check that you are recovering well. If you are having trouble with your swallowing, the Speech and Language Therapist will assess and advise you. We will give you advice on the ward, and once the team are happy with your progress, you will be able to go home. This may be later the same day or the following day, depending on your progress and the time of your surgery.

On discharge from the ward, we will give you details of your next outpatient appointment. This appointment will be with the team when your results are available. You will require a follow-up appointment with both the ENT surgeon and Speech and Language Therapist.

As the laser treatment is to your voice box, your voice is likely to be worse following the procedure. It may sound husky and weak. This is normal. It is important to follow voice care advice and begin the voice exercises at the time recommended by your Speech and Language Therapist.

Following the procedure, you should:

- Use your voice gently for the first 2-3 days after your operation. This allows initial inflammation to settle (follow advice from your hospital team).
- Do not deliberately whisper, shout, strain, sing, or raise the volume of your voice.
- If you live alone or generally speak very little during the day, we advise that you use your voice gently by reading out loud, talking to yourself etc.
- Avoid coughing (if possible) or excessive throat clearing.
- Avoid smoky and / or dusty environments.
- Do keep well hydrated and drink plenty of water regularly throughout the day.
- If you take treatment for reflux (indigestion), continue with this as normal.

For the first few weeks following your surgery, carry out saline inhalations (breathing in steam from a bowl of hot water) to aid wound healing. To do this, dissolve half-a-teaspoon of salt in 250ml (one cup) of very hot water in a bowl, hold your head over the bowl with a towel over your head to contain the steam, and breathe. Use the hottest water possible, but take care to avoid scalding.

The Speech and Language Therapist will give you a number of voice exercises to help your voice recover. You should begin these when advised. Once you have begun your exercises, continue to do them daily, little and often, building up gradually. This will help to optimise the sound of your voice and reduce unnecessary strain. The exercises should not give you any pain or discomfort.

The ENT surgeon will arrange to review you regularly as an outpatient and the speech and language therapist will see you as required.

If you experience any of the following after your surgery, it is important to contact the team:

- Severe pain/discomfort in your throat.
- Difficulty swallowing.
- Further deterioration in the sound of your voice.

## **General advice and consent**

Before a doctor, nurse, or therapist examines or treats you, they must seek your consent or permission. In order to make a decision, you need to have information from health professionals about the treatment or investigation, which is being offered to you. You should always ask more questions if you do not understand.

The information you receive should be about your condition, the alternatives available to you, and whether it carries risks as well as the benefits. What is important is that your consent is genuine and valid. That means:

- You must be able to give your consent.
- You must be given enough information to enable you to make a decision.
- You must be acting under your own free will, and not under the strong influence of another person.

# Information about you

We collect and use your information to provide you with care and treatment. We will need to store photos or recordings of your voice box. As part of your care, information about you will be shared between members of the healthcare team, some of whom you may not meet. The information may be used to help train staff, to check the quality of our care, to manage and plan services and to help with research. Wherever possible, we will remove any details that identify you.

Where necessary to provide you with the health care you need, your doctor will share information about you with other health professionals involved in your treatment.

Everyone working for the NHS has a legal duty to keep information about you confidential and secure.

We handle personal information in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and NHS Information Governance standards. Your information will only be seen by those who have a legitimate professional 'need to know'.

If you have any questions or concerns about patient confidentiality, please speak to your doctor in the first instance or to PALS (contact details follow).

# Useful contact numbers

York Hospital: 01904 631313

## Head and Neck Department

ENT Consultant Surgeon Secretaries:

Mr Coatesworth / Mr Nicolaides/ Mr Shayah  
01904 726598

Mr Agada 01904 726316

Clinical Nurse Specialist: 01904 726063  
01904 725726

Speech and Language Therapist: 01904 725768

## **Tell us what you think of this leaflet**

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

Speech and Language Therapy Department, York Hospital, Wigginton Road, YO31 8HE or telephone 01904 725768.

## **Teaching, training and research**

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email [yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net](mailto:yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net).

An answer phone is available out of hours.

# Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website:  
[www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/](http://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/)

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