

Care of the Professional Voice

Voice is one of the most critical ways through which we express ourselves. On a daily basis, we use volume, inflection, and intonation to convey emotion and purpose. Additionally, voice is the central component of many of our livelihoods. Particularly singers and actors but also doctors, lawyers, teachers, and any other profession you can think of rely on voice to sustain livelihood. For this reason, disorders of the voice are particularly distressing.

While many physicians may claim expertise in voice care, it is important to recognize that care of the professional voice is an increasingly sophisticated field. To suit the needs of the professional voice users, training fellowships in laryngology have been developed to educate otolaryngologists in the art and science of vocal care. Our voice team is comprised of people who have trained with some of the pioneers in this field.

We use a multi-faceted approach to best assess and treat your voice concerns. There will be a special questionnaire targeted to assess the problems faced by singers and actors. Using the data from this, and from the history we will take from you when you arrive, we will be able to better understand your problem.

Diagnostic assessment is based on two essential components: flexible fiberoptic laryngoscopy (FFL) and videostroboscopy. During the FFL exam, a small fiberoptic cord is passed through your nose to visualize your larynx (voice box). We will ask you to perform specific tasks that will allow us to view your larynx in motion and understand how you use your voice and what role this may play in your overall condition. During videostroboscopy, a close-up, slow-motion view of your larynx is obtained by looking through an angled telescope in your mouth. For both exams, we will assure that you are completely comfortable, using anesthetic sprays and counseling you about the procedures you are about to undergo. These are both extremely well-tolerated and provide a wealth of information about how your voice is functioning on a broad and focused perspective. The degree of sophistication required to interpret your videostroboscopy is a critical component of the evaluation, and one that sets us apart from the casual voice practitioner. You will leave the office with a deep understanding of your vocal issues.

You may also be asked to complete an objective voice analysis (OVA), which is a completely non-invasive way to assess your voice as it relates to your lung capacity. The lungs are the power source for the voice. Breath support and capacity impairments can affect the voice and OVA may help identify this often missed component of the vocal tract.

Speech therapy will undoubtedly be a key component to your voice care. We have specially-trained speech language pathologists, who understand the voice and techniques to improve voice use. They are specialized at targeting techniques to the individual patient and, particularly, to the demands of singers and actors. Often, diagnostic evaluation will reveal that your problem can be best treated by our voice team, and you will find significant improvement with speech and singing therapy alone.