

# Voice disorders

## What is a voice disorder?

A voice disorder is a difference in voice quality (harshness, hoarseness, higher or lower pitch, loudness) from other children of the same age and gender. It may be diagnosed by:

- your child's doctor.
- an ear, nose, and throat (ENT) specialist.
- a speech-language pathologist.

## What causes it?

To understand voice disorder, it is important to know how the voice should work. The larynx ("lar-inks", also called voice box) is on top of the trachea (windpipe). It contains the vocal folds that open and close.

When you breathe, the vocal folds relax and open so that air from the lungs can pass through without making sounds. When you talk, your vocal folds close so they vibrate and make sounds when air from the lungs passes through them.

Many things can cause a change in vocal fold vibration, resulting in a voice disorder. Some of these include:

- post-nasal drip due to allergies
- dehydration
- gastroesophageal reflux (backing up of fluids from the stomach into the esophagus)
- irritation from a breathing tube
- medicines that cause vocal fold dryness
- stress
- yelling a lot or often

## How can I help my child?

The following activities can help your child take good care of his or her voice:

- Drink plenty of water.
- Avoid caffeine.
- Limit screaming, yelling, loud crying, and cheering. Encourage periods of quiet play throughout the day.
- Encourage your child to replace yelling with clapping, stomping, or blowing whistles at team events.
- Avoid too much coughing and throat clearing.
- Encourage your child not to yell from a distance, and to come closer to talk.
- Try to decrease environmental noise, such as TV and radio, so that conversations can be done more softly.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Questions?

If you have any questions, please call your speech-language pathologist in the Developmental and Rehabilitation Services Department.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Therapist signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota  
Patient/Family Education  
2525 Chicago Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55404  
Last Reviewed 6/2013 ©Copyright