

Voice

The voice is a very delicate and difficult problem for any surgeon to deal with. I was fortunate enough to study under one of the premier voice surgeons in the world while in Philadelphia, RT Sataloff, M.D.. The voice is produced from a complex interworking of the lungs, vocal folds, mouth, tongue, and sinuses. Most of the attention is at the vocal folds (vocal cords). The nerves that control the vocal folds are easy to injure in thyroid, spine, heart and even lung surgeries. Surgery can be done to move the now paralyzed vocal fold into a better position to work with the good one. Using microscopic surgical techniques masses, polyps, or even tumors can all be removed to help improve voice function.

What are the vocal folds needed for: The most important function is actually to protect the lungs. If food, or even water, gets into the lungs it will cause severe pneumonia. One of the side effects of this closure mechanism is voice.

Why do you do surgery on the vocal folds: It can be anything from a paralyzed vocal cord to a mass.

How do you do surgery on the voice box: Most surgeries are done through the mouth with a long metal tube so I can look directly at the vocal folds. Some surgery requires a small cut in the neck to implant gore-tex, silicon blocks, or other materials in the voice box.

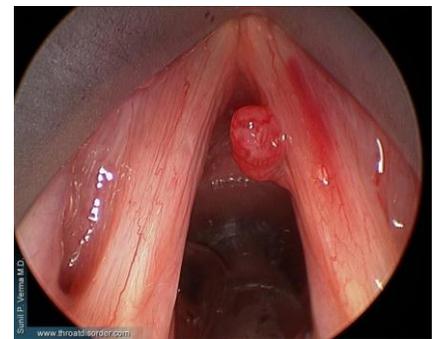
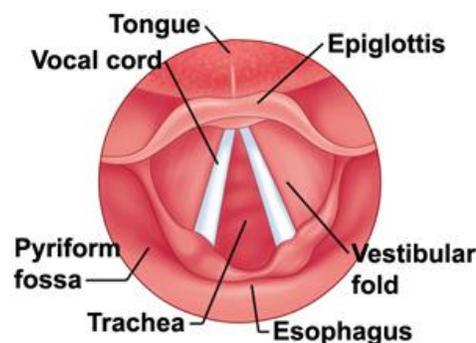
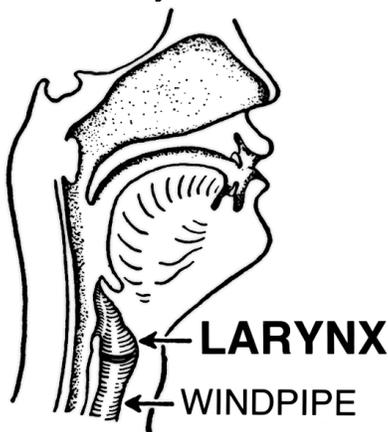
The most common type of surgery is injecting a gel into the vocal folds. This gel is the same one used in plastic surgery to augment the lips and wrinkle line. It will usually absorb in a few weeks to months. There are other injections that will last months or even a few years. If you need permanent voice augmentation permanent substances such as gore-tex can be used.

What are the risks of voice surgery: There is always risk of further damage to the voice, the most common risk is damage to the front teeth from the tube in the mouth.

Important post-op instructions: Often you are placed on voice rest (not allowed to talk, or make any sounds) after surgery for a few days.

Long term ramifications: The goal is to restore as near to normal voice function as possible.

How long does surgery last: This greatly depends on what the problem is, and what needs to be done to fix it. Usually 30 minutes to an hour.



Above is a vocal fold with a large right sided polyp.



Above are normal vocal folds in their open and closed position.