

What is a Voice Disorder?

A voice is said to be “disordered” when a person’s pitch, loudness or quality differs from those of similar age, gender, cultural background or location. You cannot tell the cause of a problem from the sound of the voice. A person with vocal nodules (not cancerous) may sound much worse than someone with laryngeal cancer. Changes to the voice can develop slowly or suddenly.



Voice Problems/Disorders May Be Due To:

- misusing the voice (e.g., using a pitch that is too high or low, excessive voice use, screaming);
- benign vocal cord lesions (e.g., such as nodules or polyps);
- upper respiratory infections (e.g., colds, bronchitis);
- breathing difficulties;
- acid reflux (i.e., backup of stomach acid);
- neurological conditions (e.g., stroke, brain injury, Parkinson’s disease);
- surgery and/or accidents;
- throat cancer; and
- muscle tension and/or stress/psychological issues.

Symptoms of Voice Problems/Disorders:

- your voice sounds raspy or hoarse;
- you often feel a lump in your throat;
- it’s an effort to talk;
- your voice gets weaker the more you talk;
- you’ve lost the ability to sing high notes;
- your throat often feels raw, strained or sore;
- you frequently clear your throat; and
- your voice problem has lasted more than 2 or 3 weeks.

Consult a Speech-Language Pathologist if you have experienced one or more of these symptoms as you may have a voice problem/disorder.

Additional Resources

Provincial Voice Care Resource Program/Pacific Voice Clinic:

- [What are Voice Problems](#)
- [Voice Hygiene](#)
- [Throat and Gastro-Esophageal Reflux](#)
- [Voice Amplifiers](#)
- [Voice Care Literature](#)
- [ASHA Voice Information Sheet](#)

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Getting Help

If you suspect a problem, consult a Registered Speech-Language Pathologist (R.SLP). To find a practitioner:

- Contact HEALTH LINK - Health Advice 24/7 at 8-1-1 or visit: www.MyHealth.Alberta.ca
- Enquire at a Public Health Centre or your child’s school.
- Find a private practice SLP:
 - Search the Yellow Pages
 - Contact the Alberta Speech-Language Association of Private Practitioners (ASAPP) website at www.asapp.ca.