



## VOICE THERAPY

### *Why is voice therapy recommended for hoarseness?*

Voice therapy has been demonstrated to be effective for hoarseness across the lifespan, from children to older adults. Voice therapy is the first line of treatment for vocal fold lesions like vocal nodules, polyps, or cysts. These lesions often occur in people with vocally intense occupations, like teachers, attorneys, or clergymen. Another possible cause of these lesions is vocal overdoing, often seen in sports enthusiasts; in socially active, aggressive, or loud children; or in high-energy adults who often speak loudly.

Voice therapy, specifically the Lee Silverman Voice Therapy method, has been demonstrated to be the most effective method of treating the lower volume, lower energy, and rapid-rate voice/speech of individuals with Parkinson disease.

Voice therapy has been used to treat hoarseness concurrently with other medical therapies like botulinum toxin injections for spasmodic dysphonia and/or tremor. Voice therapy has been used alone in the treatment of unilateral vocal fold paralysis and has been used to improve the outcome of surgical procedures, as in vocal fold augmentation or thyroplasty. Voice therapy is an important component of any comprehensive surgical treatment for hoarseness.

### *What happens in voice therapy?*

Voice therapy is a program designed to reduce hoarseness through guided change in vocal behaviors and lifestyle changes. Voice therapy consists of a variety of tasks designed to eliminate harmful vocal behavior, shape healthy vocal behavior, and assist in vocal fold wound healing after surgery or injury. Voice therapy for hoarseness generally consists of 1 to 2 therapy sessions each week for 4 to 8 weeks. The duration of therapy is determined by the origin of the hoarseness and severity of the problem, co-occurring medical therapy, and importantly, patient commitment to the practice and generalization of new vocal behaviors outside the therapy session.

### *Who provides voice therapy?*

Certified and licensed speech-language pathologists are healthcare professionals with the expertise needed to provide effective behavioral treatment for hoarseness.

*How do I find a qualified speech-language pathologist who has experience in voice?*

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is an excellent resource for finding a certified speech-language pathologist by going to the ASHA website ([www.asha.org](http://www.asha.org)).

*Does insurance cover voice therapy?*

Generally, Medicare, under the guidelines for coverage of speech therapy, will cover voice therapy if provided by a certified and licensed speech-language pathologist, ordered by a physician, and deemed medically necessary for the diagnosis. Medicaid varies from state to state but generally covers voice therapy, under the rules for speech therapy, up to the age of 18 years. It is best to contact your local Medicaid office, as there are state differences and program differences. Private insurance companies vary and the consumer is guided to contact his or her insurance company for specific guidelines for their purchased policies.

*Are speech therapy and voice therapy the same?*

Speech therapy is a term that encompasses a variety of therapies, including voice therapy. Most insurance companies refer to voice therapy as speech therapy, but they are the same thing if provided by a certified and licensed speech-language pathologist.

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