

**Other notes:**

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**Your speech pathologist is:**

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**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Hours:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Useful web sites/ resources:**

<http://www.gbmc.org/voice/anatomyphysiologyofthelarynx.cfm>  
[www.backup.com.uk](http://www.backup.com.uk)  
[www.ragincomm.com](http://www.ragincomm.com)

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**Acknowledgements:**

Funding provided by Allied Health Training and Development Cancer Care Initiative (January 2008)  
Developed by Speech Pathology Department Princess Alexandra Hospital (June 2008)  
Radiation Oncology Department at Princess Alexandra Hospital, Brisbane, QLD, for advice regarding the content of these brochures  
Speech Pathologists Australia-wide who have contributed to the proofreading and content of these brochures

# Speech Pathology and Radiation Oncology

## Voice Problems (Dysphonia)



health · care · people



Queensland Government



## What is Dysphonia?

“Dysphonia” is the term used to describe a change in the sound of your voice quality.

## Why do some patients who have radiation therapy experience a change in their voice?

Having cancer near or on the vocal cords may already have caused a change in your voice quality before your treatment has started. Radiation to or near the voice box (larynx) may change the sound of your voice. Radiation treatment of the larynx and vocal cords can cause your throat to feel rough and sore. This side effect is normal. This rough feeling can cause a change in your voice and this may occur within the first 2-3 weeks of treatment. Your voice may become rough sounding and softer in volume and you may find yourself straining to be heard.

For some people, a change in their voice will only be a minor, temporary problem and their voice will return to normal, or near normal, as the tissues heal after treatment. For others, it may cause permanent changes to the sound of their voice.

Adjusting to the change in your voice quality will take time for you and your family and friends. The reactions of strangers may be difficult initially, but may get easier. You can put your listener at ease by simply explaining that you have had an operation and/ or radiation that has made your voice sound different.

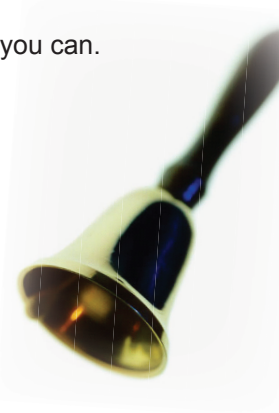
## What is the speech pathologist's role?

The speech pathologist is a specialist in voice assessment and treatment. Having difficulty using your voice, and voice changes even temporarily, can be frightening and frustrating. Your speech pathologist can help you best look after your voice and communicate in the clearest and most effective way by giving you special suggestions or exercises.

## How can I look after my voice during radiation?

Drinking the recommended daily intake of water to reduce the drying effect in your throat.

- Breathing warm moist air (humidification) can moisten and soothe your vocal cords. (Refer to the brochure on Humidification for more information).
- Do not strain when you talk as this can be damaging to your vocal cords.
- Use your voice gently.
- Look at the person you are talking to. This may help them understand you.
- Talk in a quiet environment so you are understood.
- Don't yell or talk over background noise.
- Use a whistle or bell to gain the attention of someone in another room.
- Rest your voice as often as you can.



## Future Treatment

Most people who have dysphonia may need to see a speech pathologist for some time after radiation therapy to help improve their voice.

You may be referred to a voice clinic so the speech pathologist and ear nose and throat specialist (ENT) can further assess your voice.

Voice changes from radiation therapy may improve, however some changes may be permanent.

