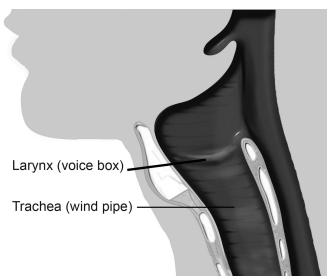


About Larynx Surgery: Laryngectomy



What Is the Larynx?

The larynx is your voice box. It sits at the top of the windpipe. It makes the bulge in the front of the neck called the Adam's apple.



Location of the larynx.

The larynx contains vocal cords that create sound when you speak or sing. It also helps hold the windpipe open so you can breathe. It protects the lungs with a reflex that makes you cough when food or liquid touch it.

What Is a Laryngectomy?

A laryngectomy is surgery to remove all or part of the larynx. It is often part of the treatment for cancer of the larynx (also called laryngeal cancer). Your surgeon may also remove lymph nodes in the neck. For more information about lymph node removal, please see the *Lymph Node Surgery* factsheet.

Taking out the larynx can cause problems with breathing. Your surgeon may need to make an opening in the front of your neck to your trachea so air can move freely into your lungs. This opening is called a tracheostomy. It may be temporary or permanent, depending on the type of surgery you have. For more information, please see the *Tracheostomy* factsheet.

After Your Laryngectomy

A laryngectomy may change your ability to swallow. After surgery, you will get the nutrition and water you need through a feeding tube into your stomach or intestine. Your care team will tell you and your caregiver how to use the feeding tube if you still need it after you go home.

Depending on the type of surgery you have, you may not be able to speak as you did before. You may need to use a voice box machine or special valve to help you speak.

A person trained in speech and swallowing therapy will work with you before and after surgery.

Possible Side Effects and What You Can Do

Pain. After any surgery, some pain is normal. While you are in the hospital, your care team will do their best to help control your pain. They will ask you often about how much pain you are feeling. This helps your care team decide what pain medicines will work best for you. They may put pain medicine directly into your veins through an IV or give you pills.

When you go home, you will get a prescription for the same pain pills you took in the hospital. Follow the directions for your medicines. Tell your care team if your pain does not get better or if it gets worse.

Infection. Any time you have a break in your skin, there is a risk of infection. Good hand washing is the best and easiest way to prevent infection. Wash or

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If you have questions or concerns, please call:

Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Head and Neck Nurse Line 801-587-4566

After hours, weekends, and holidays

Call the University Hospital operator at 801-581-2121. Ask for the ear, nose, and throat doctor on call.

disinfect your hands often, especially after using the bathroom, before eating, and before touching the area of your surgery. Make sure your caregivers and visitors do, too.

Watch for these signs that show an infection may be starting:

- More pain, redness, or warmth at your surgery area
- More blood or fluid coming from your surgery area
- A fever higher than 100.3° F

If you notice any of these signs, call your care team right away.

Swelling. Swelling around the surgery area can cause pressure on your throat. This can make it hard to breathe. The surgeon will put tubes to drain fluids from the surgery area to help prevent swelling. While you are in the hospital, nurses will connect a suction device to the tubes to help remove the fluid. Your nurses will check the fluid often to make sure there is no sign of an infection.

Swelling can also make it hard to swallow. The swelling should get better a few days after surgery. Tell your care team or speech and swallowing therapist if you cannot drink liquids or if you have questions about what you should eat and drink.

Bleeding. The head and neck have many blood vessels, so bleeding is a risk during this surgery. Your nurses will check the fluid from the drain tubes for signs of too much bleeding. Some bleeding is common right after surgery, but the fluid that drains becomes more yellow as you heal.

Pneumonia. Pneumonia is a very serious lung infection. Staying in bed too much keeps your lungs from expanding all the way. This can raise the risk of getting pneumonia after surgery. To help prevent pneumonia, your nurses will ask you to start walking as soon after your surgery as it is safe. This helps keep your lungs in good shape.

Blood clots. Not being active raises the risk of blood clots in your legs. If a clot happens, it can move through the veins to your lungs. This can be deadly. To help prevent blood clots, your nurses will ask you to get up and move around as much as you can. While you are in the hospital, your care team may put foam boots on your legs. The boots inflate and deflate to keep the blood in your leg veins moving so it cannot clot. Your doctor may also prescribe a blood thinner medicine to help prevent blood clots.

Your Notes	