

LARYNGITIS



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

A minor inflammation of the larynx (voice box) and surrounding tissues. Inflammation causes swelling and pain and is a reaction to injury, infection or irritation. The disorder is common, affects all ages, and occurs more often in late fall, winter, and early spring.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Hoarseness, weak voice, or loss of voice.
- Sore throat; tickling in the back of the throat.
- Feeling like you have a lump in your throat.
- Slight fever (sometimes).
- Swallowing difficulty (rare).

CAUSES

There are many factors that can lead to the inflammation of the larynx. The most common is a viral infection.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Viral infection from a recent cold or flu-like illness.
- Excessive use of the voice (such as singers, politicians, cheerleaders, or young children who cry or yell strenuously).
- Exposure to irritants such as mold, pollen and pollutants, or irritating chemicals.
- Allergies.
- Smoking or being around second-hand smoke.
- Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD).
- Rarely, it may be a bacterial infection, or be caused by disorders such as tuberculosis, syphilis, fungal infection, or tumor.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Most cases are caused by a virus. Taking steps to prevent viral infections such as hand washing may help.
- Take care to not overuse the voice.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Laryngitis usually clears up on its own in 10 to 14 days.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Chronic hoarseness.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Most people will self-treat this disorder. If symptoms persist, are severe, or cause concern, see your health care provider. An exam of the throat, ears and nose, can usually confirm the diagnosis. Medical tests are normally not needed.
- Home care is the main form of treatment.
- Avoid using your voice as much as possible. Don't whisper (it can irritate the throat). Write notes to communicate. For most cases, resting the voice for a few days is all that is needed.
- Suck on throat lozenges, cough drops, or hard candy.
- To help relieve minor pain, gargle often with double-strength tea or warm salt water (one-half teaspoon of salt to 8 oz. of water).
- Hot, steamy showers also help.
- Avoid smoking and second-hand cigarette smoke.

MEDICATIONS

For minor discomfort, you may use nonprescription drugs, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen.

ACTIVITY

Usually no limits.

DIET

No special diet. Increased fluid intake may be helpful.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has hoarseness or other symptoms of laryngitis that last longer than 2 weeks.
- You feel very ill, are vomiting, have a high fever, or difficulty breathing. If these symptoms develop in a child, call immediately.

Special notes:

More notes on the back of this page