



Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) Department

Laryngoscopy

Following your ENT clinic appointment, a laryngoscopy under anaesthetic has been recommended. The following notes should help to answer some of your questions about the operation and help you decide whether you wish to proceed with surgery.

Why is a laryngoscopy performed?

The usual reason is a problem with the voice – hoarseness, roughness or weakness. Sometimes it is needed because of soreness deep in the throat.

In the outpatient clinic, it is possible to view the voice box area with a mirror or by using a flexible telescope passed through the nose. Examination under an anaesthetic allows a more detailed examination of the area using a microscope, and allows biopsies (small bites of tissue) to be taken for examination in the laboratory.

What does the operation involve?

Once you have decided to proceed with the operation, your GP will be informed and your name will be added to the waiting list. All of the operations are performed in the Dorset County Hospital in Dorchester or in the Day Surgery Unit in Yeovil District Hospital. Please be sure to let us know of any dates for surgery which are inconvenient eg holiday dates.

Admission is almost always on the day of surgery. After admission a junior ENT doctor will take a history and examine you, and your anaesthetist will come to see you and discuss the anaesthetic side of things. We need to know if you have any loose upper teeth or upper dental crowns, and if you have any problems with neck stiffness or restriction of neck movements.

The operation is performed with you asleep under the anaesthetic (a general anaesthetic), and takes 10-15 minutes in all. Your head is tilted back and mouth opened wide. A rigid metal telescope is passed through the mouth into the lower part of the throat, and the microscope moved into position to view the voice box in detail. Sometimes a few bites of tissue are taken from the vocal cords with fine forceps.

At the end of the operation, you move across to the recovery room in the theatre and, when you have woken up from the anaesthetic, you are taken back to the ward.

Sometimes the operation is arranged as a day case, and sometimes an overnight stay is required. Pain from the operation is generally not a problem. There may be slight soreness low in the throat which may be controlled with simple painkillers. The anaesthetic agent used will often give you aches in the arms, legs and back the following day or two, but then settles down. If biopsies are taken from the vocal cords, we will ask you not to speak for a few days to allow the area to heal properly.

Following a general anaesthetic, you may find that you need more rest than before for a day or two. This is normal. You should be able to resume normal activities, apart from using your voice, within a couple of days at the most.

You should keep away from dry and smoky atmospheres and other people who may have coughs and colds. Please do not smoke.

What are the possible complications of the operation?

The operation is performed under general anaesthetic, and this anaesthetic carries a small risk of complications common to all general anaesthesia. This is greatly influenced by general medical factors such as smoking, obesity, heart and lung disease, high blood pressure, diabetes etc.

Damage to the upper teeth can occur, especially if you have unhealthy or loose teeth or dental crowns. This is why we ask you to let us know about any problems you may have with the teeth.

Neck stiffness may result from tilting back the head during the operation. Please let us know if you have neck problems.

If you have a problem with one or other jaw joint – clicking, recurrent dislocation or pain – please let us know, because the mouth needs to be opened wide during the operation.

Where can I find out more about the operation?

We would recommend the ENT UK website www.entuk.org
This has information about the microlaryngoscopy procedure.

Or Google 'laryngoscopy information leaflet' and many ENT departments around the country have produced their own patient information leaflets.

If you have any questions about general anaesthetics, the Royal College of Anaesthetists website has a lot of information: <https://www.rcoa.ac.uk/patientinfo>

Useful contact numbers:

Dorset County Hospital switchboard - 01305 251150

ENT secretaries (Dorchester)

Mr Ford	01305 255138	Mr Lale	01305 255510
Mr Tsirves	01305 253167	Mr Kenway	01305 255138
Mr De Zoysa	01305 255138	Mr Chatzimichalis	01305 255510
Mr Sim	01305 254205		

ENT secretaries (Yeovil)

Tel: 01935 384210

About this leaflet:

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If you have feedback regarding the accuracy of the information contained in this leaflet, or if you would like a list of references used to develop this leaflet, please email pals@dchft.nhs.uk



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Williams Avenue, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 2JY
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