

Voice Disorders: Causes, Types and Preventive Measures

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DESCRIPTION

Voice disorders, also known as dysphonia, refer to a wide range of conditions that affect the production, quality, or control of the voice. These disorders can significantly impact an individual's ability to communicate effectively and may lead to discomfort, reduced self-confidence, and limitations in daily activities.

Types of voice disorders

Vocal fold nodules: Vocal fold nodules are small, benign growths that develop on the vocal cords due to vocal strain or misuse. They typically cause hoarseness, breathiness, and a rough voice quality.

Vocal fold polyps: Vocal fold polyps are fluid-filled lesions that occur on the vocal cords. They can result from vocal misuse, vocal trauma, or chronic irritation. Symptoms include hoarseness, a breathy voice, and reduced vocal range.

Vocal fold paralysis: Vocal fold paralysis occurs when one or both of the vocal cords are unable to move or vibrate properly. It can lead to a weak or breathy voice, vocal fatigue, and difficulty swallowing.

Muscle tension dysphonia: Muscle tension dysphonia is characterized by excessive muscle tension in the neck and throat during vocalization. It can cause a strained or effortful voice, as well as discomfort or pain while speaking.

Spasmodic dysphonia: Spasmodic dysphonia is a neurological voice disorder characterized by involuntary spasms or contractions of the muscles that control the vocal cords. It can lead to a strained, strained-strangled, or tight voice quality.

Laryngitis: Laryngitis refers to inflammation of the larynx, which can result from viral or bacterial infections, vocal overuse, allergies, or irritants. Symptoms include hoarseness, sore throat, and voice fatigue.

Causes

Voice disorders can have various causes, including:

Vocal misuse/abuse: Excessive shouting, talking loudly, frequent throat clearing, or improper singing techniques can strain the vocal cords and contribute to the development of voice disorders.

Vocal overuse: Prolonged or excessive use of the voice without sufficient rest or vocal care can lead to vocal fatigue, vocal cord irritation, and the development of vocal disorders.

Vocal trauma: Trauma to the vocal cords caused by injury, surgery, or intubation can result in scarring or damage, leading to voice problems.

Neurological conditions: Certain neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, stroke, or multiple sclerosis, can affect the control and coordination of the muscles involved in voice production, leading to voice disorders.

Allergies and irritants: Allergic reactions to environmental factors like pollen, dust, or irritants such as smoke or chemicals can cause inflammation in the vocal cords, resulting in voice problems.

Prevention

Preventing voice disorders involves practicing good vocal hygiene and adopting healthy habits:

Practice proper vocal technique: Learn proper breathing techniques, vocal warm-ups, and voice projection methods to reduce strain on the vocal cords during speaking or singing.

Avoid vocal strain: Limit shouting, yelling, or excessive talking, especially in noisy environments. Take breaks when using the voice extensively.

Hydration: Stay well-hydrated by drinking sufficient water throughout the day to keep the vocal cords moisturized and prevent dryness.

Avoid irritants: Minimize exposure to smoke, allergens, chemicals, and other irritants that can irritate the vocal cords.

Rest and recovery: Allow the voice sufficient rest and recovery time, particularly after periods of intensive voice use or when experiencing voice fatigue.

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Maintain general health: Maintain a healthy lifestyle by exercising regularly, managing stress, getting enough sleep, and avoiding excessive alcohol consumption and smoking, as these factors can affect vocal health.

Voice disorders can significantly impact an individual's ability to communicate effectively and may have physical, emotional, and social consequences. Understanding the types, causes, and symptoms of voice disorders is crucial for early identification, appropriate treatment, and preventive measures. Seeking professional help from a speech-language pathologist or otolaryngologist (ear, nose, and throat specialist) is

recommended for proper evaluation, diagnosis, and management of voice disorders. Treatment options may include vocal rest, voice therapy, medications, surgical interventions, and lifestyle modifications. By practicing good vocal hygiene, such as proper vocal technique, avoiding vocal strain, staying hydrated, and minimizing exposure to irritants, individuals can reduce the risk of developing voice disorders. It is essential to prioritize vocal health, seek professional guidance when needed, and address any underlying conditions contributing to voice problems. Remember, a healthy voice allows for effective communication and enhances overall well-being.