



## Voice disorders

Voice disorders can be caused by many factors, including:

- vocal misuse – excessive talking, throat clearing, coughing, inhaling irritants, smoking, second-hand smoke exposure, screaming or yelling
- organic causes – structural anomalies, nasal deviations, vocal fold nodules, vocal fold paralysis, etc. vocal fold irritation and swelling from allergies, respiratory disease, GERD/reflux.
- functional causes – tension in the vocal folds, stress

## How do I know if my child has a voice disorder?

Children who have a voice disorder may present with any of the following:

- change in quality of voice (harshness, hoarseness, breathiness)
- abnormal loudness (too soft or too loud)
- change in pitch or use of a voice that is too high or too low
- abnormal resonance (sounds as if the child always has a cold or you can hear air escaping from nose when the child talks).

## What can I do if I suspect my child has a voice disorder?

Anyone who experiences vocal change or hoarseness for more than two weeks should be examined by a doctor, preferably an otolaryngologist, who is a doctor or surgeon specializing in diseases of the ears, nose, throat, and head and neck.

Following an examination, the otolaryngologist may refer the child to a speech-language pathologist (speech therapist). The therapist will evaluate the pitch, loudness, and quality of the child's voice, and assess vocal techniques, such as breathing and style of voicing. A voice recording often is made, and trial therapy techniques may be used to test their effectiveness at improving the voice.

## How Courage Kenny Kids can help

In speech therapy, our clinicians will use specialized techniques, structured play activities and games to address your child's individual vocal and communication needs. We will teach the principles of excellent voice care and help your child learn how to produce an easier, healthier and stronger voice. Our goal is to help your child find a voice that works better at home, in the classroom, and out in the community.

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## How much will my child improve with treatment?

The outlook for every child is different depending on a variety of factors. The severity of the disorder, the cause of the disorder, the child's age when treatment begins, individual response to treatment, and the support of parents and teachers all make a difference.

Voice disorders can be tricky because they are often the result of faulty habits. Success in voice therapy is therefore directly affected by improved voice patterns, which must be used habitually in all situations to be effective. Family support and willingness to assist in modifying behaviors and in motivating the child are crucial for improved voice practices.

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First published: 10/13/2015

Last reviewed: 10/12/2015