

Laser Cordotomy / Arytenoidectomy

What to expect for your surgery:

The surgery will be performed under general anesthesia and usually lasts about an hour. In most cases, you should expect an overnight stay in the hospital.

The procedure involves using an instrument in the mouth to allow exposure of the voice box. A microscope is used to examine the vocal cords and scar tissue as well as a portion of the back of the vocal cords is then removed with a laser. This is done in an attempt to relieve breathing problems related to scarring of the voice box or vocal cords that are paralyzed. If you have a tracheotomy tube in place, it will usually not be removed at the time of the procedure. If you do not have a tracheotomy tube before surgery, it is possible that you may require one at the time of the procedure for safety.

Please make sure not to eat or drink anything after midnight the night before unless you need a small sip of water for medications on the morning of the procedure.

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What to expect after your surgery:

Pain following the procedure varies. A prescription medication will be provided to control pain. For mild pain, it is acceptable to use acetaminophen. However, note that the pain prescription provided may contain acetaminophen and therefore, you should not use acetaminophen if you are also using the prescription pain medication.

A prescription for a steroid medication may also be provided on the day of your surgery. If you suffer from diabetes, this prescription may not be given.

You are not restricted from using your voice after surgery. However, you can expect a change in your voice as a result of the procedure. While there may be some gradual improvement in your voice over time, you can expect some permanent hoarseness and weakness to the voice.

You may have a productive cough for several weeks following the procedure and some of the discharge that you bring up may be bloody.

You may resume your preoperative diet after surgery but you should anticipate that you may cough with thin liquids.

You may resume normal activity following the procedure.

Most patients will experience significant improvement in breathing. The degree of improvement will be variable and due to some swelling in the airway may take several days or weeks to become apparent.

Please call your physician if you experience any of the following: shortness of breath, increasing noisy breathing, inability to swallow, fever >101, or excessive pain not controlled by the pain medication provided.

Your First Postoperative Visit:

A postoperative visit should be scheduled around 1 week after the procedure. If one has not been previously scheduled, please call the office for an appointment.

At your first postoperative visit a fiber optic camera will be used to examine your voice box. Additional follow up will be recommended and scheduled.

Because of the nature of airway scarring some patients will experience recurrence of symptoms of shortness of breath and noisy breathing. As a result, routine follow up is recommended and you are encouraged to call your physician if you have increasing shortness of breath, noisy breathing, or any reason to suspect recurrence.

Swallowing problems can occur as a result of the voice box problems and as a result of the surgery. Most commonly this involves thin liquids. If this is a problem that you experience after surgery you should discuss this with your physician.