

VOCAL CORD DYSFUNCTION

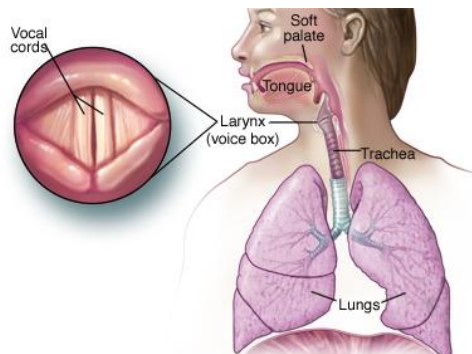
What is vocal cord dysfunction (VCD)?

Vocal cord dysfunction (VCD) occurs when the vocal cords (voice box) do not open correctly. This disorder is also referred to as paradoxical vocal fold movement. VCD is sometimes confused with asthma because some of the symptoms are similar. In asthma, the airways (bronchial tubes) tighten, making breathing difficult. With VCD, the vocal cord muscles tighten, which also makes breathing difficult. Unlike asthma, VCD is *not* an allergic response starting in the immune system. To add to the confusion, many people with asthma also have VCD.

What are the symptoms of VCD?

Symptoms of VCD can include:

- Difficulty breathing
- Coughing
- Wheezing
- Throat tightness
- Hoarse voice
- Voice changes



Much like with asthma, breathing in lung irritants, exercising, a cold or viral infection, or Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) may trigger symptoms of VCD. Unlike asthma, VCD causes more difficulty breathing in than breathing out. The reverse is true for symptoms of asthma.

Are there treatment options for VCD?

Treatment for VCD typically involves activities that relax the throat muscles including:

- Speech therapy
- Deep breathing techniques

Relaxed Throat Breathing Techniques

1. Place hand on abdomen just above the belt and other hand on chest.
2. Relax throat & jaw by closing lips gently, leaving the teeth open within the mouth (relaxing the jaw). Rest tongue on the floor of the mouth. Breathe *IN* slowly (controlled) through nose. Breathe *OUT* slowly (controlled) through relaxed mouth/throat while making an "S" sound (with the tongue gently up against the palate) or pursing lips like breathing out through a straw.
3. Inhale and exhale using abdomen/diaphragm. The abdomen should move in and out. Make sure that the chest wall does not rise and fall. (Watch the movement of the hands.) Practice daily, and use for coughing spells/vocal cord spasm until symptoms subside (for at least 5 repetitions).