

Department of Speech and Language Therapy

Reinke's Oedema

What is Reinke's Oedema?

Reinke's Oedema is a fluid filled swelling of one or both of the vocal cords.

The quality of your voice is likely to be affected by Reinke's Oedema. Speaking may become more difficult and sound breathy or rough. The pitch of your voice may sound lower than it used to. These changes can be gradual.

Causes and risks

Reinke's Oedema is most commonly associated with smoking. Some research shows a link with acid reflux and an under-active thyroid. It tends to affect women more than men.

Diagnosing Reinke's Oedema

Usually an Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) doctor will examine your larynx (voice box) using a small flexible camera which goes through your nose. This takes place in the outpatient's clinic and does not require admission to hospital.

If the ENT doctor suspects that an under-active thyroid is the cause of Reinke's Oedema, they will arrange the appropriate tests.

Treatments available

The choice of treatment depends on the cause of Reinke's Oedema.

- **Surgery** may be required to remove some of the fluid from the vocal cords.
- **Speech and language therapy** can help to improve vocal health and voice quality. Your speech and language therapist will explain how to care for your voice and reduce vocal misuse and irritants.
- **Medication** to reduce acid reflux or balance the hormones produced by the thyroid gland if needed.
- **Stopping smoking** alone may result in Reinke's Oedema subsiding.

What you can do

Looking after your voice, stopping smoking and reducing irritants can help the vocal cords to recover. Advice on how to do this will be given to you by the speech and language therapist. Advice sheets that are given to you should only be used under the direction and supervision of a qualified Speech and Language Therapist

If you continue to smoke and irritate your vocal cords after treatment, Reinke's Oedema is likely to return.



We are currently working towards a smoke-free site. Smoking is only permitted in the designated smoking areas.

For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS Stop Smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169

Help with this leaflet:



If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio format, please ask the department to contact Patient Information: 01223 216032 or

patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk



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