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## Department of Speech and Language Therapy

# Presbyphonia

### What is presbyphonia?

Presbyphonia is a term used to describe the ageing voice. As we get older the structures in our voice box and the muscles that support our vocal folds may change as part of the normal ageing process. This can result in changes in the quality of our voice.

### What are the symptoms of presbyphonia?

The primary symptom is usually a change in voice quality. For example, your voice may sound quieter or more breathy, making it difficult for you to raise the volume of your voice. It may have a hoarse quality so that your voice is no longer as clear as it was. Your pitch range may also be reduced so that if you are a singer you may notice that you are no longer able reach the higher notes.

### How will my diagnosis be confirmed?

You will be seen by a member of the ENT (ear, nose and throat) team who will examine your vocal folds and then may diagnose presbyphonia.

### What causes presbyphonia?

Presbyphonia is caused by ageing - although this is not to say that all people will experience voice difficulties to the extent that it impacts on their everyday lives. Your general physical condition, such as your overall health, posture, breathing and fitness levels can all affect the extent to which your voice changes as you get older. As changes happen to other parts of your body as you age, changes can happen in the voice box - muscles may lose some of their elasticity or tone and this can impact on the voice in the ways previously mentioned.

### How is presbyphonia treated?

Following on from your ENT examination you may be referred to a speech and language therapist for an assessment. They can give you advice and teach you specific exercises which should help to lessen the symptoms associated with presbyphonia.

## What can I do to help my symptoms?

Looking after your voice is very important in overcoming the symptoms associated with presbyphonia. Here are some simple changes you can make to help improve your voice quality:

- Avoid overusing your voice, shouting, whispering, excessive use of the telephone or talking over background noise
- Drink plenty of fluid and try to keep your intake of caffeinated drinks to a minimum.
- Limit smoking and alcohol intake or avoid altogether.
- Avoid dry, smoky or dusty atmospheres.
- If your voice becomes hoarse, avoid whispering and try to use your voice gently.

If you have any other questions about presbyphonia ask your Speech and Language Therapist or doctor who will be happy to help.



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](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)



### Document history

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