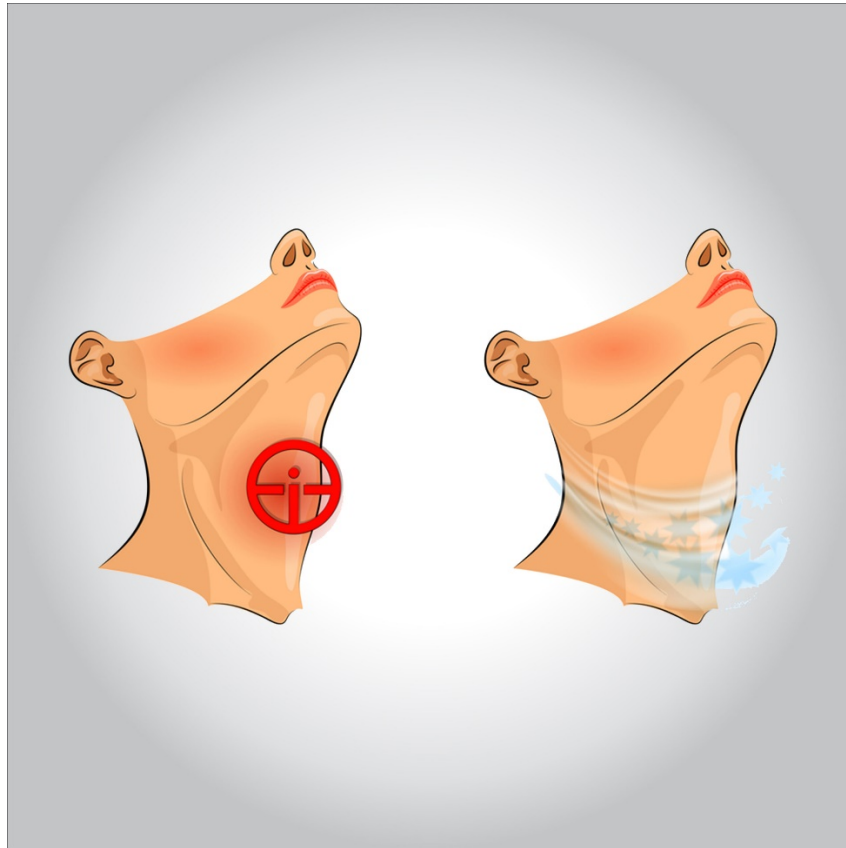


Laryngitis



You open your mouth to talk, and all that comes out is a whisper or squeak. You've got laryngitis. And you may wonder: How did this happen?

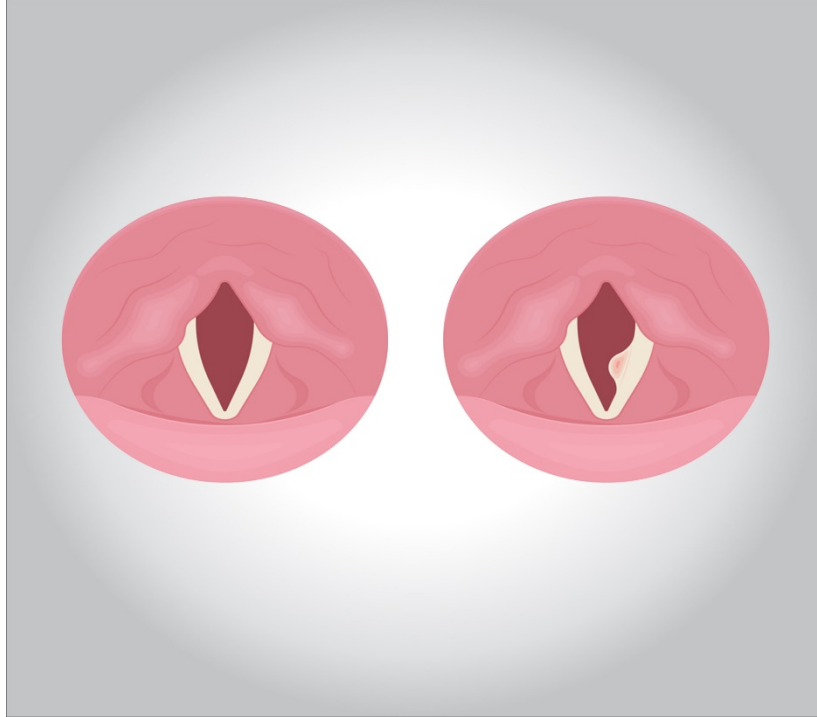
Swelling in the voice box, also known as the larynx, causes laryngitis. This organ is in your upper neck just beyond the back of your throat. An infection, such as a cold, the flu, or bronchitis, may spur the swelling. Or the problem could be something as simple as overuse.

The vocal cords, two folds of tissue within your larynx, become inflamed. Sound from the area is muffled, and you are hoarse.

Laryngitis usually isn't a big deal. With proper treatment, it should go away in no more than 3 weeks. But you have ways to stop it from happening or make it go away faster.

Laryngitis is often related to another illness, such as cold, flu, or bronchitis. Symptoms include:

- **Sore throat**
- **A low-grade fever**
- **Hoarseness**
- **Trouble speaking**
- **A dry cough**
- **A constant urge to clear your throat**
- **Swollen glands**



You have a greater chance of getting it if you smoke, overuse your voice a lot (if you are a singer or public speaker, for example), or are prone to colds, the flu, and bronchitis.

What are possible causes?

Though it's usually virus-related, there are also ongoing, or chronic, forms of the illness, generally brought on by smoking and alcohol abuse.

Acid reflux can also play a role. Strong acids can travel up from the stomach into your throat and get all the way to your larynx. This can irritate it and make you lose your voice.

Other causes of chronic cases include:

- **Allergies**
- **Bacterial infection**
- **Fungal infection, such as thrush**
- **Injury, such as a hit to the throat**
- **Inhalation of chemical fumes**
- **Sinus disease**
- **Some health conditions, including cancer, can also help cause laryngitis.**

Treatments and Medications

The best treatment is to rest your voice. Without the stress of everyday use, it will often recover on its own. If your need to speak clearly is urgent, a doctor may prescribe corticosteroids. This is a class of man-made drugs that mimic hormones, such as cortisol, that your body makes naturally. They reduce swelling.

You can try a number of home remedies to aid in your healing:

- **Drink plenty of fluids. Early on, swallowing may be painful, but the more you're hydrated, the better. But, avoid alcohol and caffeine.**
- **Use humidifiers and menthol inhalers. Moisture is your friend, and menthol can be soothing.**
- **Gargle with warm salt water. The salinity not only soothes the area, but also reduces swelling.**
- **Avoid dry, smoky, or dusty rooms.**
- **You may also suck on throat lozenges, which often contain herbs such as eucalyptus and mint, known for calming sore throats.**

What Not to Do

Stay away from decongestants. They dry you out when your throat wants moisture.

Certain herbs — such as licorice, marshmallow, and slippery elm — have reputations as throat pain relievers, but they interact with some medications. Talk to your doctor before taking them.

When Should I See a Doctor?

Laryngitis in adults is not serious, but you should see a doctor if you've been hoarse for more than 2 weeks, are coughing up blood, have a temperature above 103 F, or are having trouble breathing.

However, it can be very serious in children. Watch for fever and call a doctor if:

- Your child is younger than 3 months old and has a temperature of 100 F or higher or is older than 3 months old has a fever of 102 F or higher.**
- He's having trouble swallowing or breathing, or is making high-pitched sounds when inhaling, or drooling more than usual.**

In kids, it may lead to croup, a narrowing of the airways, or epiglottitis, an inflammation of the flap at the top of the larynx. This condition can be life-threatening, so get emergency treatment if you or a child in your care has had laryngitis and starts gasping or having any trouble breathing.