How does radiotherapy affect the voice?
Radiotherapy treatment to your throat can cause changes to your voice. You may find you have a:

- deeper pitch to your voice
- hoarse-sounding voice
- weak voice with low volume
- breathy voice
- loss of voice

These changes to your voice usually start midway through the treatment and may continue after the treatment has finished. They are usually short-lived but your voice may not be completely normal after treatment.

How can I help my voice?
To help your voice:

- Drink plenty of water, weak squash etc.
- Suck small sugar-free sweets.
- Have times when you rest your voice.

Try to avoid:

- Smoking – smoking will make your symptoms worse and increase your risk of the cancer returning.
- Smoky and dusty atmospheres.
- Alcohol (particularly spirits).
- Caffeinated drinks, e.g. tea, coffee.
- Menthol-based sweets e.g. Tunes, Lockets.
- Forced whispering - quiet talking is best.
- Clearing your throat
- Talking when carrying heavy objects.
- Talking over loud background noise such as the TV, stereo, radio, traffic or vacuum.
Speech and Language Therapy

How can I get more help?
The speech and language therapist is available to help you at any stage of your treatment. She will give you a programme of exercises to help your voice recover and you should continue to do these regularly after your treatment.

The speech and language therapist works with other people in the team looking after you to help you at all times during your treatment and will arrange individual appointments to see you as well as seeing you in the ENT clinics with the surgeon.

What should I do if I am worried about my voice?
If you have any concerns about your voice after radiotherapy please contact the Speech and Language Therapy Department on:

0121 507 4475
Monday – Friday, 8.30am - 4.30pm

Other useful contacts

ENT clinic reception
0121 507 4556
Monday – Friday, 8.30am – 4.30pm

Macmillan Nurse
0121 507 5490

Dietitian
0121 507 4085

Consultant’s secretaries
0121 507 5110/ 4558

Further information
For more information about our hospitals and services please see our websites www.swbh.nhs.uk and www.swbhengage.com, follow us on Twitter @SWBHnhs and like us on Facebook www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs.
Voice care during radiotherapy

Speech and Language Therapy

Sources used for the information in this leaflet

- Greene and Mathieson, ‘The voice and it’s disorders’