

Laser Treatment in the Office for Your Voice Disorder

What is an office-based laser treatment?

It is a treatment done in an ENT clinic room to look at your voice box. A camera (endoscope) can go either through the mouth or the nose, it depends on what is being done. By using laser energy to the problem area(s) on your vocal cord(s), your voice should improve over time.

How long does it take?

Your visit will be about 30 minutes, but the treatment takes only a few minutes. We will talk with you about safety and give you helpful tips and ideas, so everything goes well.

How does the laser work?

The ARC (advanced radiographic capability) laser has a flexible fiber that goes through the camera that is placed in your nose. The laser fiber is very precise and can be aimed to apply energy to the problem area of your vocal fold(s). Sometimes the laser is used to destroy a lesion on your vocal fold(s) and sometimes it is used to apply energy so that the vocal folds remodel themselves over time.

Do I have to rest my voice after the treatment?

Your doctor will let you know if you need to follow any voice rest. Follow your doctor's orders. You may be asked to not talk at all for up to 72 hours.

Will my voice be better right after the voice rest period?

No. Your voice will heal with time. Your voice will likely be worse before it gets better so try to be patient. If your voice does not improve you should let us know.

Working with the Voice Speech-Language Pathologist

You will learn skills from them and listen to their expert advice on how to restore your voice. If you do what they teach you, you will have a faster recovery and a better outcome. Meeting with them before and after the treatment will assure your best outcome.

Getting Ready

You must not eat or drink anything for 3 hours before the laser treatment. This includes water, coffee, and juices.

You must tell us before the treatment if you are taking blood-thinning medicines such as warfarin (Coumadin®), aspirin (even a baby aspirin), or Plavix®. Ask your primary doctor if you can stop these medicines for 3 days before the treatment.

Do not take anti-inflammatory medicines such as Advil® for 3 days before or 2 days after the laser treatment. This can cause bleeding which may cause problems with the treatment outcome. You may use Tylenol® (acetaminophen).

If you have diabetes, you may need to adjust your insulin because you will not eat right before the treatment. Please talk to your primary care doctor about the best way to do this. Do not take oral hypoglycemic medicine the morning of your treatment. Bring your blood sugar monitor to the clinic with you so that you can check your blood sugar before the treatment. If you have symptoms of low blood sugar (feeling clammy, weak, faint) you can drink orange juice or suck on a hard candy.

Before Treatment

Before the laser treatment, the nursing staff will review your medical history and go over your allergies, blood thinners and ask if you might be pregnant. You will meet the team, so you know who is helping you. There most likely will be a nurse, ENT residents, and sometimes medical students or other doctors who are learning. Your doctor will go over the consent form.

A team member will give you time-tested tips and ideas on how to focus on breathing and ways to relax your muscles.

Numbing medicine will be applied to your nose and you will breathe topical lidocaine through a nebulizer to help numb your throat. This takes about 4 minutes.

During Treatment

A camera will be passed through your nose to look at your vocal cords and apply small amounts of lidocaine while you say “ee”. This will make you cough a little and then the cough will go away. Your throat will feel strange at this point. This is normal. That strange feeling lasts about an hour and then will go back to normal.

The camera will stay in your nose while the laser fiber is passed through it. Laser safety glasses are worn by everyone in the room and sometimes laser masks are also used. Laser energy is applied to your vocal cords. The doctor will tell you how much time is left and talk with you about the tips and ideas for a smooth treatment.

After the Procedure

You will be asked questions about any pain you have, and we will talk about your care. Someone from the team will go with you to the front desk to schedule follow up visits with the speech-language pathologists and your doctor.

Pain Relief

You may have throat pain after the numbing medicine wears off. Most patients take Tylenol® (acetaminophen) for pain relief. You may also get pain relief from sucking on ice chips or drinking ice water.

Activity

Avoid strenuous activity or exercise for 2-3 days after the laser treatment.

Diet

You may resume your normal diet after the numbing medicine wears off. Drink plenty of fluids. It may be better to avoid spicy foods for 2-3 days.

When to Call

- You have pain that doesn't go away with Tylenol®, ice chips or ice water.
- You cough up bright red blood or clots.
- **If you have trouble breathing, go to the nearest ER or call 911.**

Who to Call

ENT (Otolaryngology) Clinic
600 Highland Ave, Madison, WI
Monday – Friday, 8 am to 5 pm
(608) 263-6190 or 1-800-323-8942

ENT (Otolaryngology) Clinic
1 S. Park Medical Center, Madison, WI
Monday – Friday, 8 am to 5 pm
(608) 287-2500

After hours, your call will go to the paging operator. Ask for the ENT (Otolaryngology) doctor on call. Give your name and phone number with the area code. The doctor will call you back.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 9/2023. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing HF#6042.