

Direct Fiber-optic (Flexible or Rigid) Laryngoscopy

Direct laryngoscopy is an exam that lets your doctor look deeper at the back of the throat, including the voice box (larynx) and vocal cords, with a scope (laryngoscope). The scope is either flexible or rigid. A flexible scope is often used in the office to look inside your nose, throat and voice box. A rigid scope may be used in the operating room.

Reasons for a Laryngoscopy

1. **To look for causes of throat or voice problems.** You may have a laryngoscopy if you have symptoms in the throat or voice box such as:
 - Trouble swallowing or breathing
 - Voice changes
 - Sensation of “lump in the throat” or foreign object in throat.
 - Cough or throat pain that won’t go away
2. **To get a better look at an abnormal area seen on an imaging test (such as a CT scan).**
3. **To get biopsy samples of any abnormal areas.** We may use a laryngoscopy to take samples of tissue of the vocal cords or nearby parts of the throat. This is done by passing long, thin instruments down the laryngoscope, such as small forceps (tweezers) to collect the samples. The biopsy samples are then looked at in the lab. This will tell us if the abnormal areas are cancer.

4. **To treat some problems in the vocal cords or throat (even some early cancers).** Long, thin instruments can be passed down the laryngoscope to remove small growths (tumors or polyps) on the vocal cords. A small laser on the end of a laryngoscope can also burn away abnormal areas. An injection can be done into the vocal cord(s) if you are having trouble with your voice or your vocal cords don’t vibrate normally.

What to Expect

- If a treatment was done, you may be hoarse for a while. This is common and should go away with time.
- **Do not whisper. This can strain the vocal cords.**
- If your exam is done in the office, your throat will feel numb for 30-45 minutes. Do not eat or drink for at least 1 hour.
- If a flexible scope is used through your nose, your nose may be sore temporarily.
- For the first 24-48 hours, keep your head raised 30-45° (on at least 2 or more pillows) when you are resting.
- If you have a sore throat, drink plenty of liquids and eat only soft bland foods until your sore throat is gone.
- You may need to rest your voice. Follow the voice rest limit your surgeon or speech therapist told you.
- **Do not** gargle.
- **Do not** smoke. Smoking increases throat irritation and secretions.

If You Had a Biopsy

- You may have blood-tinged spit. Avoid hard coughing and clearing your throat. This may cause more bleeding.
- It will take about 3-7 days for your doctor to receive the test results. The doctor will then tell you your results.

Pain Relief

Patients often complain of a sore throat. Before discharge, your doctor will prescribe pain medicine for you if you need it.

When to Call

- **Shortness of breath go to the nearest emergency room or call 911.**
- Severe trouble swallowing.
- Coughing up large blood clots.
- A fever over 100.5° F (when taken by mouth).
- If you feel like you are not healing like you should.

Who to Call

ENT Clinic at University Hospital
Weekdays, 8 am to 5 pm
(608) 263-6190 or (800) 323-8942

ENT Clinic at 1 S. Park Street
Weekdays, 8 am to 5 pm
608-287-2500

After clinic hours and weekends, the clinic number will be answered by the paging operator. Ask for the ENT resident on call. Be sure to leave your name, area code, and phone number. The doctor will call you back.