

## Patient Information

# Muscle Tension Dysphonia (MTD)

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## What is Muscle Tension Dysphonia?

**Muscle Tension Dysphonia (MTD)** is a voice disorder caused by too much tension in the muscles around the voice box (larynx). This tension interferes with normal voice production, making the voice sound strained, hoarse, or weak. It is one of the most common causes of voice problems in adults.

MTD is not caused by damage to the vocal cords, but by the way the muscles are used when speaking. It may occur on its own or alongside another voice issue.

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## What Causes MTD?

MTD can be triggered by a combination of factors, including:

- **Vocal overuse or misuse:** Excessive speaking, shouting, or poor vocal technique.
  - **Stress and anxiety:** Emotional tension can lead to physical tension in the throat and neck muscles.
  - **Upper respiratory infections:** Can lead to voice strain during recovery.
  - **Poor posture:** Affects breathing and muscle tension in the neck and shoulders.
  - **Reflux (LPR or GORD):** Stomach acid can irritate the throat and lead to increased muscle tension.
  - **Underlying voice disorders:** MTD may develop as a reaction to another vocal issue (e.g. nodules, polyps, or inflammation).
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## Symptoms of MTD

People with MTD may experience:

- **Hoarseness**
- **Tight, strained, or effortful voice**
- **Voice that tires easily**
- **Breathy or weak voice**
- **Throat discomfort or pain when speaking**
- **Sensation of tightness or a lump in the throat**
- **Frequent need to clear the throat**

Voice changes may come on gradually or suddenly, and symptoms often worsen with prolonged voice use.

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## How is MTD Diagnosed?

Diagnosis usually involves:

1. **Detailed history:** Your doctor or speech therapist will ask about your symptoms, voice use, and any recent illness or stress.
2. **Laryngoscopy:** A small camera (flexible or rigid scope) is used to look at your vocal cords while you speak.
3. **Voice assessment:** A speech and language therapist may evaluate how your voice sounds and how you use your voice muscles.

MTD is diagnosed when there is no visible damage to the vocal cords but signs of excessive muscle tension are observed.

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## Treatment for MTD

### 1. Voice Therapy (Main Treatment)

Voice therapy with a speech and language therapist is the primary and most effective treatment. It helps to:

- Reduce unnecessary muscle tension
- Improve breathing and vocal technique
- Promote healthy voice habits
- Restore normal voice function

Voice therapy may include exercises, posture training, relaxation techniques, and vocal hygiene advice.

### 2. Stress Management

Reducing stress and anxiety can help relieve throat and neck tension. Techniques may include:

- Deep breathing
- Meditation or mindfulness
- Physical relaxation exercises

### 3. Addressing Contributing Factors

Depending on the cause, additional treatments may include:

- **Treatment for acid reflux**
- **Allergy management**
- **Rest after a respiratory infection**
- **Improving posture and body mechanics**

Surgery or medication is not usually needed unless another condition is contributing to the problem.

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## Voice Care Tips

- Avoid yelling or speaking over loud noise
  - Take vocal breaks during the day
  - Stay well-hydrated (drink water regularly)
  - Avoid throat clearing—try sipping water instead
  - Use amplification (like a microphone) if needed
  - Don't whisper for long periods—it can strain your voice
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## Prognosis

With proper treatment, most people with MTD recover well and return to normal voice use. Early diagnosis and intervention can shorten recovery time and prevent long-term voice strain.

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## When to See a Specialist

See a doctor, ENT (ear, nose and throat) specialist, or speech therapist if you:

- Have hoarseness lasting longer than 2–3 weeks
  - Experience pain or effort while speaking
  - Notice sudden voice changes or loss
  - Use your voice professionally and are struggling
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## Summary

<b>What is MTD?</b>	<b>A voice disorder caused by too much muscle tension around the voice box.</b>
<b>Causes</b>	Vocal overuse, stress, reflux, poor posture, or other voice conditions.
<b>Symptoms</b>	Hoarse, tight, strained voice; throat discomfort; vocal fatigue.
<b>Diagnosis</b>	Based on voice exam, laryngoscopy, and voice assessment.

<b>What is MTD?</b>	<b>A voice disorder caused by too much muscle tension around the voice box.</b>
<b>Treatment</b>	Voice therapy (main treatment), stress management, treating contributing factors.
<b>Prognosis</b>	Very good with therapy and voice care.

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If you think you may have muscle tension dysphonia or are concerned about your voice, speak with your GP or ENT specialist. Early help can make a big difference.