



Voice Dysfunction in Neurologic Disorders

Causes

It is not uncommon for people with neurologic disorders to have problems with their voice. Neurologic disorders sometimes run in families but can also happen randomly. It is good to ask your neurologist if your condition could be hereditary. Certain rare conditions may require your family members and children to get tested.

Symptoms, Signs, and Diagnosis

Many disorders can weaken the muscles of the throat and the voice box which can lead to difficulty speaking and swallowing. One of the most common neurologic disorders that can affect the voice is **Parkinson's disease** which can lead to slurring and a weak, monotone voice. Essential tremor is also very common and can result in a shaky voice quality. Patients who have had a stroke can also be severely affected in terms of their speech and swallowing.

A typical office visit to the ENT may include a scope exam which involves passing a small, flexible camera through the nose to quickly examine the throat and the voice box. This helps your doctor determine what the throat problem and how best to treat it. ENTs can diagnose and treat voice problems but may suspect a neurologic disorder based on your symptoms. In this case, they will refer you to a neurology specialist.

Treatment

A neurologist or a primary care doctor will treat your neurologic disorder but most likely the ENT and/or a speech therapist will treat the voice issues. After determining the problem, the ENT may offer you voice therapy or certain types of procedures based on the source of your symptoms.