



Reinke's edema

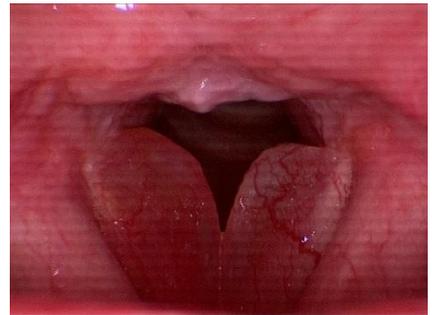
Causes

Reinke's edema is a diffuse swelling of the vocal cords (frequently on both sides) which often occurs in the setting of long-term smoking. Reinke's edema is benign and does not in and of itself represent cancer nor pre-cancer.

Symptoms, Signs, and Diagnosis

The most common symptom of Reinke's edema is hoarseness. Most often, patients report a lower or deeper pitch of voice. For example, women may notice being mistaken for a man on the phone. Occasionally shortness of breath is also noted; this may be a sign of more severe Reinke's edema.

Diagnosis of Reinke's edema is made by examination of the larynx (aka voice box), most often with a flexible or rigid telescope (called laryngoscopy). Stroboscopy (a specialized test to evaluate vibration and closure of the vocal cords) may also provide extremely helpful clinical information.



Treatment

The most critical aspect of treatment of Reinke's edema is stopping smoking. This does not result in reversal of the Reinke's edema, but may help prevent the Reinke's edema from worsening over time.

There is currently insufficient scientific evidence to determine whether there are differences between the impact of traditional nicotine cigarettes, e-cigarettes, or other types of smoking (e.g. marijuana) on Reinke's edema. Thus, all smoking is discouraged.

Surgical treatment to address Reinke's edema and its associated hoarseness may consist of surgical removal (aka phonosurgery), laser ablation treatment, or a combination of both.

Voice outcome after surgical treatment can vary; often the voice can be improved but the patient should be aware that there is risk of unchanged or worsened voice as well.

Reinke's edema does not necessarily have to be removed; however, the patient should know that the voice does not often spontaneously improve without treatment. If a person is at risk of developing cancer of the larynx (aka voice box), then repeat laryngeal examination(s) may be recommended for monitoring purposes.