



Office Laser Treatment

Purpose

While many laryngeal surgeries must be performed in the operating room, some lesions may be treated with an awake laser procedure in the office setting. Some advantages of performing procedures in the office rather than the operating room are decreased time and cost of the procedure, improved convenience and comfort, and avoidance of general anesthesia. The goal of office laser procedures is to improve voice quality by promoting healing and resolution of the lesion(s), without requiring a trip to the operating room.

Indications

Some examples of laryngeal lesions that may be treated with an office laser procedure include recurrent respiratory papillomatosis (RRP), vascular lesions like ectasias and varices, leukoplakia and dysplasia (which are changes to the surface of the vocal fold), vocal fold polyps, and granulomas. Not all patients with these diagnoses will be candidates for office laser treatment, and your doctor will discuss all possible treatment options with you.

Contraindications

Office laser procedures are generally very safe and an option for many patients. Some patients with medical problems such as heart or lung disease may not be eligible for office procedures – these patients require close monitoring of vital signs that cannot be provided in the office setting. As a local anesthetic is necessary for the procedure, patients with a history of an allergic reaction to lidocaine or similar medications are not candidates. Finally, patients that have poor tolerance of laryngeal exams due to discomfort, anxiety, or a strong gag reflex may not be able to complete an office laser procedure.

Pre-Procedure Considerations

Typically, you will not be asked to fast prior to your procedure, but it is recommended that you avoid a large meal before the treatment. Your physician may ask you to stop taking any blood thinning medications for several days beforehand. You can drive yourself to and from the office unless you plan to take anti-anxiety medication prior to the procedure – in that case, you will need to have a driver. Not all patients require anti-anxiety medications for these procedures, so discuss this with your physician ahead of time if you think you may need it.

Summary of Procedure

You will be seated upright in the examination chair, and your nose will be sprayed with a decongestant and a local anesthetic. A topical anesthetic (lidocaine) will be dripped onto your vocal cords, either through the laryngoscope (passed through your nose) or through your mouth. As the anesthetic is dripped, you will be asked to say "EEEEEE." It is normal to cough or gag during this part of the procedure. As your throat becomes numb, you may feel that your throat is swollen and it may feel difficult to swallow. These sensations are normal and will subside as the anesthetic wears off after the procedure.

You will be given special glasses or goggles to wear during the procedure to protect your eyes from the laser light. Once your throat is numb, the laser fiber will be passed through the laryngoscope, which will be gently guided through one side of your nose and directed towards your larynx. Your physician will position the laser fiber above the area(s) to be treated, and will activate the laser using a foot pedal. During laser treatment, you will typically be asked to just breathe comfortably, but your doctor may ask you to perform tasks such as sniffing or turning your head to better visualize the lesion(s). It is normal to smell a slight "smoky" aroma during



treatment. If you experience any pain, let your physician know, but you should experience minimal to no discomfort during the procedure. Treatment will typically last about 10-15 minutes. Once treatment is complete, the laser will be turned off and the laryngoscope will be removed through your nose.

Post-Procedure Guidelines

You will be asked not to eat or drink anything for 1-2 hours after the procedure, until the local anesthetic wears off. This is to prevent any food or liquid from going “down the wrong pipe” while your throat is still numb. Your doctor may ask you to rest or conserve your voice for a few days to allow proper healing. If you experience a mild sore throat once the anesthetic wears off, you can take over the counter pain medication such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen. A follow up appointment will be scheduled a few weeks after your procedure. At that visit, a laryngoscopy will be performed and your doctor will discuss any next steps in treatment.