

Frequently asked questions about Videostroboscopy

Does it hurt?

Whether you are 9 or 89, the most common question asked about this exam that your doctor has recommended is, “Does it hurt?” The answer is “no.” Depending on the patient, you may experience a gagging sensation or urge to swallow. A light spray of topical anesthetic or numbing medicine usually alleviates this problem. The majority of our patients tolerate this procedure without any complaints. Children sometimes require a parent or staff member to assist them in sitting still. We treat all our patients with kindness and respect, minimizing any anxiety the pt may have in any way we can.

You’re going to put “what” down my throat?

Many patients get the impression that our instruments are going down their throat. When we perform a videostroboscopy, an endoscope is placed in the mouth. This scope goes just beyond where you brush your back teeth, and does not go “down your throat.” If more pictures are required, a flexible endoscope about the size of a cooked spaghetti noodle may be placed in the patient’s nose and gently advanced down the back of the throat. This is necessary in about 30% of adult patients we see. The negative aspects of this exam can be minimized with topical anesthetic (numbing medicine) and it is generally well tolerated.

In children under the age of 12, this smaller flexible scope is almost always necessary to view the vocal folds.

Can I eat before the procedure?

Absolutely. There are no restrictions to activity before or after this procedure unless otherwise instructed by your physician. If you have a sensitive gag (you gag regularly when you brush your teeth), you may want to refrain from eating a heavy meal before your appointment for your comfort.

Why did the doctor order this test?

Your doctor has ordered that this test be performed. A licensed, certified speech language pathologist will perform this exam and your doctor will review the results later. In most cases, this test is ordered to visualize (look at) the vocal folds and surrounding structures. This may be necessary due to symptoms you are having or complaints that you have voiced, or because your doctor is trying to rule out specific problems. This study is digitally recorded and a permanent record is made. The doctor may have looked at your voice box in his/her office with a mirror or endoscope; however, the images were not recorded. This exam provides the opportunity for a detailed look, magnification, slow motion and recording. The movement of your vocal folds is so fast; it cannot be seen during a typical office exam.

What are the advantages of Videostroboscopy?

As described above, the results of this study are a permanent record of the way your voice box looks and works on the day of the exam. There is not another practical way to observe the function of the vocal cords. Stroboscopy uses brief pulses of light to illuminate the vocal folds and provide a better understanding of the function of the patient's vocal cords as well as an indication of what changes need to be made in order to treat the problem.

How long does this take?

The voice specialist is going to take a detailed medical history. This is the most time consuming part of your visit. The exam itself takes less than 5 minutes to perform. Following the exam, several measures may be taken to further describe your voice in medical terms. Your exam will be reviewed with you by the speech pathologist. She will be able to describe the results and give you recommendations to begin making improvements. She will not be able to give you a medical diagnosis. Please plan on spending about one hour in the office.

What do I do afterwards?

Unless instructed otherwise, you may continue your regular activity immediately following your appointment. If numbing medicine is applied during the exam, it takes about 20 minutes to wear off, and you may need to be cautious when drinking.

We ask that you make an appointment to follow-up with the doctor who referred you. Your doctor will review the exam and is the only person who can make a medical diagnosis. He/she will discuss any prescriptions you may need or other medical procedures recommended.