

# VOCAL CORD DYSFUNCTION REFERRAL GUIDELINE

MAINE MEDICAL PARTNERS - PEDIATRIC SPECIALTY CARE (DIV. PULMONARY MEDICINE) • 887 CONGRESS ST, SUITE 320, PORTLAND, ME • (207) 662-5522

## HIGH RISK

### SUGGESTED EMERGENT CONSULTATION

#### SYMPTOMS AND LABS

A sensation of choking or suffocation  
Cyanosis  
Worsening chest pain  
Syncope

#### SUGGESTED PREVISIT WORKUP

Spirometry with inspiratory flow loop  
Consider pulmonary evaluation  
Consider psychiatry evaluation to r/o conversion disorder  
Consider cardiac evaluation

## MODERATE RISK

### SUGGESTED CONSULTATION OR CO-MANAGEMENT

#### SYMPTOMS AND LABS

Dyspnea or difficulty getting air upon inspiration  
Difficulty breathing that interferes with exercise, causing shorter duration, leaving the field during a game of frequent albuterol use without improvement  
Tightness in the throat or chest  
A sensation of choking or suffocation  
Limited or no response to bronchodilator  
Stress, anxiety

#### SUGGESTED WORKUP

Spirometry with inspiratory flow loop  
Exercise challenge if exercise induced  
Evaluation by speech therapist who specifically deals with vocal cord treatment  
Consider pulmonary referral to assess exercise induced bronchospasm vs. vocal cord dysfunction  
Consider cardiac evaluation  
Consider allergy testing  
Consider hypnosis  
Consider counseling

## LOW RISK

### SUGGESTED ROUTINE CARE

#### SYMPTOMS AND LABS

Some difficulty breathing with exercise  
Hoarseness  
Noisy breathing  
Inspiratory stridor in absence of infection  
Tightness in the throat  
Reflux  
Stress, anxiety

#### SUGGESTED MANAGEMENT

Reassurance  
Relaxation breathing  
Consider allergy testing  
Consider treating reflux  
Consider hypnosis  
Consider counseling

## CLINICAL PEARLS

- VCD and asthma can be seen concurrently.
- Medication is not the main treatment to control symptoms.
- The mainstay of treatment is controlled breathing exercises.

*www.njc.org/healthinfo/conditions/vcd Katherine R. Newsham; Bernice K. Klaben; Victor J. Miller; Jan E. Sanders. Paradoxical Vocal-Cord Dysfunction Management in Athletes. Journal of Athletic Training 2002.;37(3):325-8*

Maine Medical  
PARTNERS

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