

What to Expect: Office Vocal Fold Injection

Why do people need vocal fold augmentation?

The vocal folds are supposed to close gently and completely when we speak. A variety of problems will keep them from closing as they should. You might have a completely paralyzed vocal fold, one that is just weak, or one (or both) that is thinned due to age. When the vocal folds don't close as they should, we have to work harder to produce a voice, or our voice may be unreliable and weak. By augmenting one or both of the vocal folds, we can improve some of those difficulties.

What is vocal fold augmentation?

It is basically adding bulk to the vocal fold. By placing that bulk inside the vocal fold, the edge that vibrates can be pushed over toward its normal position and it can be thickened to provide a better vibrating surface.

Before the procedure:

Consider bringing someone with you. Wear an old, loose, open-collared shirt, and make sure to take all of your usual medications unless I have specifically told you otherwise. Be sure to eat a light breakfast or lunch before you come.

The procedure:

On the day of your injection, we will review why you're having it done to make sure that the decision is the right one for you. Then we will numb up your nose so that the endoscope can be placed there. I will numb up your throat in the way that I think will work best for you and I may inject some numbing medicine into the skin on the front of your neck. Most patients feel that the numbing process is the worst part, and all patients cough a bit. Once you're numb, I will either insert a very fine needle into the front of your neck or use a curved handle with a small needle through your mouth to do the injection. We may check to see how your voice is improving during the procedure, and then I'll inject a little bit more so that the result will be lasting. You'll probably leave a little bit hoarse. If you'd like, you may watch the procedure on the monitor.

After the procedure:

Once the injection is done, don't eat or drink anything for an hour since you will be numb. You'll not be allowed to use your voice for 24-48 hours, so plan your activities accordingly.

Down the road:

Your voice will change quite a bit in the several weeks following the procedure and it will take a little while for your voice to hit its "sweet spot." Be patient and remember to use your voice like you have learned to do in your voice therapy sessions. Depending on the substance you and I decide to use, I expect your injection to last 2-4 months. I'll see you a month after surgery.