

Paradoxical Vocal Fold Dysfunction (PVFD)

What is paradoxical vocal fold dysfunction?

Paradoxical vocal fold dysfunction (PVFD) happens when the vocal folds narrow during breathing and block the flow of air. This causes a person to feel like they are having serious trouble breathing.

The vocal folds are located at the top of the trachea (wind pipe) and act as a valve for our breathing. When we talk, the vocal folds close so they can vibrate to make sound. When we breathe, the vocal folds should be open at a wide angle, to allow air to pass to and from the lungs with ease.

With PVFD, the vocal folds tighten, narrow, or close this valve at times during breathing. This can happen when you breathe in (inhalation) or breathe out (exhalation), but takes place most often during inhalation.

What are the signs and symptoms of PVFD?

- Sudden or irregular (may not happen all the time) shortness of breath
- Unable to take a deep or filling breath
- Tight feeling in the throat
- Noisy or wheezing sound (stridor)
- Little or no improvement with use of rescue inhalers

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.