

Vocal Cord Dysfunction (VCD) or Paradoxical Vocal Fold Dysfunction (PVFD)

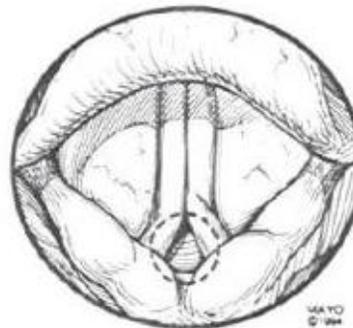
What is it?

When you breathe in, your vocal cords are open. This lets the air flow through your throat and into your lungs. When you have PVFD, the vocal cords close part of the way or all of the way when you inhale. It leaves only a small opening for air to flow into your lungs. It can cause problems with breathing.

Vocal cords are open



Closed vocal cords



What are the symptoms?

- Hard time breathing in.
- High-pitched sounds when breathing in.
- Shortness of breath and feeling like you have asthma.
- Chest pain.
- Tightness in throat or chest.
- Hoarseness or a change in your voice.

What causes it?

The cause is not known. It can feel like asthma but it may not be true asthma. In about 4 out of 10 people with VCD, asthma is also a problem. Certain things can trigger the problem such as:

- Exercise.
- Heartburn or acid reflux.
- Anxiety.
- Allergies, post-nasal drip and sinus problems.

How is it diagnosed?

- Often, it is diagnosed based on symptoms and breathing tests called pulmonary function tests.
- A vocal cord exam called a laryngoscopy should be done to make sure the vocal cords are healthy. It helps your team to know what may help make the problem better.

How is it treated?

A team of specialists are often needed to treat the problem. They can include specialists from pulmonary, ENT, asthma/allergy, speech-language pathology, respiratory therapy and psychology.

Your team will develop a program for you. A speech-language pathologist will most likely work with you to learn ways to breathe differently when feeling short of breath. Therapy helps to learn how to control symptoms that often interfere with activities. Acid reflux is often treated if it is a problem. If emotions and anxiety are part of the problem, a psychologist is often helpful. Other medicines for allergies and anxiety may be needed.

ALERT: Call your doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if you have special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.