Immediately after the surgery

- Rest your voice completely for two days. Do not speak whisper, laugh or throat clear if you can help it.
- You may cough a little at first but try to keep this to a minimum.
- Once you can feel yourself swallowing normally, drink plenty of fluids (about two litres daily). It is generally best to avoid caffeinated or alcoholic drinks, which dry out your vocal folds.
- Avoid smoke or any other irritants i.e. dust/fumes.
- Do not answer the telephone during the first 48 hours – ask people to text instead.

Two days after your operation

- Keep the volume of your voice at a normal conversational level, and rest your voice if it feels tired.
- You may find it takes several days for your voice to improve.
- Avoid shouting, throat clearing, coughing and whispering.
- It is a good idea to keep phone conversations short until you have got used to your new voice.

- Try to have short periods of voice rest between speaking.
- Keep drinking plenty of fluids, preferably water.
- The stitches in the skin will need to be taken out seven days after the operation – this can usually be done by the nurse at your GP practice.

You will normally be sent an appointment to come back to the voice clinic six weeks after your procedure, to see how your voice has settled.

If you have any questions or need further advice in the period until you are seen back in ENT Outpatients, please contact the Speech and Language Therapy Department on:

Telephone: 0121 371 3483
Email: slt.uhb@nhs.net

Speech and Language Therapy Dept
Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham
Mindelsohn Way, Edgbaston
Birmingham, B15 2GW
Telephone: 0121 371 3483
Email: slt.uhb@nhs.net
You have been advised that a thyroplasty operation involving one of your vocal folds (vocal cords) will be helpful for your voice. This surgery may be offered when one vocal fold is not moving properly and, as a result of this paralysis, the vocal folds cannot close normally to produce a clear voice. Your cough and voice may be weak and you may have difficulty swallowing liquids.

The operation aims to move the paralysed vocal fold closer to the one which works normally, and therefore close the gap between them when you speak and cough. This is a type of medialisation procedure and is sometimes called medialisation laryngoplasty. Your ENT (ear, nose and throat) surgeon will already have explained to you what this involves and obtained your consent to the operation.

How is the surgery performed?
The procedure is carried out in the operating theatre under sedation. Before you have the surgery you may be asked to perform a number of voice tasks, so that your voice can be assessed. These may be recorded.

Before the procedure starts, you will be sedated (very drowsy). Local anaesthetic is injected into the skin of your neck and a small cut is made on the side of the paralysed vocal fold. A small opening is then made in the cartilage of the voice box (the thyroid cartilage).

At this point, local anaesthetic will be sprayed into your nose and then a nasendoscope (flexible camera) will be passed through your nose. This is done in the same way as when we examined your vocal folds in clinic.

An implant such as Gore-Tex or a small plastic block will be inserted into the window created, aiming to move the paralysed vocal fold over into a position where it can more easily meet the moving vocal fold. When the implant is inserted, you may be asked to speak so that the effect on your voice quality can be assessed. When the surgeons are happy with the quality of your voice, they will place some stitches in the skin. The whole operation generally takes about 60 minutes.

Are there any risks?
The risks of sedation will have been explained to you when you gave your consent. You may experience some discomfort during the procedure but you will be sedated. Your throat may take 6-8 weeks to heal after surgery, so over this time you should treat your voice with care.

Before your operation
- Avoid smoking and drinking alcohol and if you have been prescribed reflux medication make sure you continue to take it regularly.
- Plan to have voice rest after your surgery i.e. warn your friends and family that you will not be able to speak for two days.
- Have a pad and pen available to write things down.
- Plan to use email and texting rather than speaking.
- Inhale steam at least once, but preferably twice a day.
- You should try to bring someone with you on the day of the procedure for support. You should be able to go home the same day if you are well enough.
- Due to the fact you have had sedation you will be unable to drive home after the procedure, so you will need to arrange transport and for someone to stay with you overnight.