



# Valve changing and the 'Out of hours' service: Voice after laryngectomy

**This leaflet outlines the Speech and Language Therapy service for patients with a laryngectomy in Berkshire.**

## The Speech and Language Therapy service for laryngectomy patients

The Speech and Language Therapy service for patients with laryngectomy in Berkshire operates Monday-Friday (8am-4pm) out of the **Royal Berkshire Hospital**.

If you have a laryngectomy query, please telephone the Royal Berkshire Hospital on **07901 224017** or email [rbft.speechlanguage@nhs.net](mailto:rbft.speechlanguage@nhs.net)

## When will I need to change my valve?

Your valve needs changing if it is leaking. You may see fluid leaking through or around the valve or find that you cough after drinking. You may notice that your stoma protector / heat and moisture exchange (HME) cassettes are stained with what you have drunk. It may also need changing if you notice a deterioration in your voice quality.

**A leaking valve is usually not an emergency. If it occurs out of hours, you should be able to wait for an appointment in office hours. Do not forget to bring your dilator and any other laryngectomy equipment to your appointment.**

## What do I need to do when my valve needs changing?

If you have been taught how to self-change your valve, you can do this at home. Please ensure that you have a spare valve with you and are familiar with the 'Out of hours' service.

If your valve is usually changed at the hospital, you need to make a speech and language therapy appointment as soon as possible. Call **07901 224017**. If nobody answers, please leave a message and we will return your call.

## HMEs and stoma protection

If the valve is leaking, you can still continue to protect your stoma in the usual way, for example, wearing a baseplate and HME cassette.

## Can I drink if my valve needs changing?

You can continue to drink if your valve needs changing, but please take small sips and thicken your drinks to Level 2 or if needed, Level 3 consistency, using '**Nestle Resource Thicken Up Clear**' powder. If you have been given a 'plug insert' and know how to use it, you can also use this.

Thickening your drinks will help prevent them running through your valve into your airway. It will minimise coughing when drinking and help to prevent a chest infection developing.

If you need thickener, you can get this on repeat prescription from your GP.

### What if I am unable to make a voice?

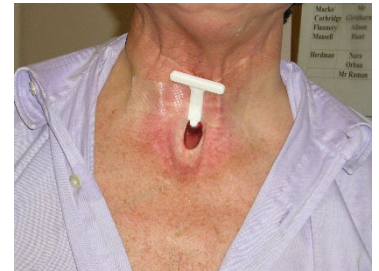
If you are unable to get a voice, but don't think the valve is leaking, the valve may be blocked. Clean it carefully with your cleaning brush and try again. If the problem persists, try having a hot (not scalding) drink and try 'flushing' the valve with the cleaning pipette and a little water if familiar with this technique.

If this still does not work, please make an appointment.

### What should I do if my valve falls out?

Immediate action needs to be taken if your valve has fallen out. The puncture may close quickly if nothing is done to stent it, but please do not panic.

**Within office hours** (8am-4pm), please insert your dilator, or if you have been given one, Ryles tube, into the puncture to keep it open. Contact the Speech and language Therapy Team urgently to arrange an appointment.



Remember you will need to thicken your fluids to reduce any leaking around the dilator/tube and you will not have a voice until a replacement valve is fitted. If you cannot insert the dilator or the leak around the tube is severe, you must NOT eat and drink and will need to go straight to your local Accident & Emergency Department (A&E).

**Out of hours** there are two options:

- 1) **Insert your dilator / Ryles tube into the puncture:** Tape it into place and contact the on-call ENT doctor via the hospital switchboard for advice. As above, you may need to remain nil by mouth during this time if there is leakage around the dilator/Ryles tube.
- 2) **If unable to insert the dilator:** Do not have anything to eat or drink, you must remain nil by mouth and attend your nearest A&E as soon as possible. You may use an emergency ambulance if necessary. At the hospital a dilator / Ryles tube will be inserted into the puncture for you and taped into place. A plan will then be made for placing a new valve.

### Contact us

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To find out more about our Trust visit [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

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