

# LARYNGOPHARYNGEAL REFLUX

## Information Sheet

### What is Laryngopharyngeal Reflux?

Laryngopharyngeal Reflux (LPR) is the backflow of stomach juices (acid and enzymes) into the pharynx (throat) and larynx (voice box). This type of reflux is not usually accompanied by the symptom of heartburn and consequently LPR can also be referred to as “Silent Reflux”. However, throat symptoms are very common as the tissue linings and sensory nerves in the upper airway (e.g. throat, larynx, lungs, nasal cavities and sinuses) are more sensitive than the oesophagus to the effects of reflux.



### Signs and Symptoms of LPR

Exposure of the upper airway to stomach juices can cause irritation, swelling and tissue damage which can lead to the following common symptoms:

- Hoarse voice
- Feeling of ‘lump in the throat’ (globus pharyngeus)
- Post-nasal drip (feeling of thick mucus dripping down the back of the throat)
- Excessive throat mucus
- Frequent throat clearing
- Chronic cough
- Sore throat
- Noisy breathing (caused by irritation of the air passages)
- Asthma
- Laryngospasm (sudden breathing difficulty caused by the vocal cords slamming shut making it hard to breath in)
- Difficulties swallowing

Created by: Janet Savva (Highly Specialised Speech and Language Therapist)  
Somerset Speech Voice and Swallowing Therapy (SSVST)

Date Created: April 2020  
Review Date: April 2022

Email: [ssvst@outlook.com](mailto:ssvst@outlook.com)  
Web: [www.somersetspeechvoiceandswallowingtherapy.com](http://www.somersetspeechvoiceandswallowingtherapy.com)

# SOMERSET SPEECH VOICE AND SWALLOWING THERAPY

## What causes LPR?

Adults may develop LPR after a cold or flu as the illness may make the throat and larynx more sensitive to stomach juices. However, people are more likely to suffer from LPR if they have the following:

- Problems with their lower oesophageal sphincter (the band of muscle between the stomach and the oesophagus responsible for preventing backflow of stomach contents)
- Slow stomach emptying
- A hiatus hernia (where the upper part of the stomach bulges through the diaphragm into the chest cavity)
- Problems with oesophagus dysmotility (irregular contractions of the oesophagus responsible for propelling swallowed material down the oesophagus into the stomach)
- Are overweight

## How is LPR diagnosed?

Diagnosis is often based on presenting symptoms and examination of the upper airway by an Ear, Nose and Throat doctor. The Reflux Symptom Index is a useful and validated assessment tool designed to identify LPR symptoms.

| Within the past month, how did the following affect you?                   | 0 = No problem<br>5 = Severe problem |               |                      |                 |   |   |
|--|--------------------------------------|---------------|----------------------|-----------------|---|---|
| 1. Hoarseness or a problem with your voice                                 | 0                                    | 1             | 2                    | 3               | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Clearing your throat  | 0                                    | 1             | 2                    | 3               | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Excess throat mucus or postnasal drip                                   | 0                                    | 1             | 2                    | 3               | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Difficulty swallowing food, liquid or pills                             | 0                                    | 1             | 2                    | 3               | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Coughing after you ate or after lying down                              | 0                                    | 1             | 2                    | 3               | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Breathing difficulties or choking episodes                              | 0                                    | 1             | 2                    | 3               | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Troublesome or annoying cough   | 0                                    | 1             | 2                    | 3               | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Sensation of something sticking in your throat or a lump in your throat | 0                                    | 1             | 2                    | 3               | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Heartburn, chest pain, indigestion or stomach acid coming up            | 0                                    | 1             | 2                    | 3               | 4 | 5 |
| Total Score:   | 0-10<br>normal                       | 11-20<br>mild | 21-30<br>significant | 31-45<br>severe |   |   |

A score of 15 or greater is predictive of a 90% chance of having LPR.

Created by: Janet Savva (Highly Specialised Speech and Language Therapist)  
Somerset Speech Voice and Swallowing Therapy (SSVST)

Date Created: April 2020  
Review Date: April 2022

Email: [ssvst@outlook.com](mailto:ssvst@outlook.com)  
Web: [www.somersetspeechvoiceandswallowingtherapy.com](http://www.somersetspeechvoiceandswallowingtherapy.com)

# SOMERSET SPEECH VOICE AND SWALLOWING THERAPY

## Why is Speech and Language Therapy useful?

Speech and Language Therapists have an expert knowledge of the upper airway and digestive system. They can work with you to identify any dietary and lifestyle factors that could be exacerbating your LPR symptoms.

If not already completed, you may require referral for additional investigations such as an examination of your upper airway by an Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) doctor or examination and reflux testing by a Gastroenterologist, to aid diagnosis and treatment planning.

## What will happen at my initial consultation?

At your initial consultation I will take a comprehensive case history which will include a review of your medical history, any medications you take regularly and your lifestyle. We will discuss how these could be impacting on your LPR symptoms. Baseline non-invasive assessments will be completed, and you will be provided with an immediate LPR treatment plan.

## What will happen in therapy?

You may need to return for a follow up appointment to review your LPR treatment plan. You may also require targeted therapy to help resolve persistent LPR symptoms such as voice problems, globus pharyngeus (lump in the throat sensation), laryngospasms and/or chronic cough.

The number of sessions you require will depend on the cause and severity of your LPR or any contributing medical problems. However most importantly your progress will be influenced by your commitment to implementing lifestyle and dietary changes.

**Created by:** Janet Savva (Highly Specialised Speech and Language Therapist)  
Somerset Speech Voice and Swallowing Therapy (SSVST)

**Date Created:** April 2020  
**Review Date:** April 2022

**Email:** [ssvst@outlook.com](mailto:ssvst@outlook.com)  
**Web:** [www.somersetspeechvoiceandswallowingtherapy.com](http://www.somersetspeechvoiceandswallowingtherapy.com)