

Learning Esophageal Speech

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INTRODUCTION

There are various methods of rehabilitating speech in a laryngectomy, amongst which esophageal speech is the oldest technique, which though requires extensive training, can be learnt anywhere, and does not require specialized equipment/surgery. At our institute, we have been successfully conducting a laryngectomy club, wherein few of our patients have now become trainers, as well as role models for the newer inductees. However, it is vital that the patients as well as their families are highly motivated for a successful outcome.

The following steps will help a new comer and his or her family member/caregiver to understand how this technique can be applied.

PRELIMINARY FACTS

Air is vital for both respiration and vocalization.

In an unaffected person, circulation of air in the body is a natural phenomena, on the other hand a laryngectomy cannot breathe through either mouth or nose. For respiration he/she is fully dependant on the stoma hole to breathe, but there are no sounds emitted because air is not gulped through the mouth or nose. However if he/she is able to suck air in the mouth and practice these steps vocal sounds can be created.

STAGE I

- Suck air into mouth by opening and closing lips simultaneously.
- Once air has got into the mouth, inject it into the throat by pushing the tongue backward.
- Instantly open the lips and try Belch (Dhakkar) by pulling your abdomen slightly in.

- Whilst Belching try and produce/pronounce an AH sound.

This will create a Vocal Sound.

STAGE II

As soon as the AH sound is achieved, continue practicing in the following manner:

- Suck air once- Pronounce AH once.
- Practice 5 times, e.g. AH, AH, AH, AH, AH.
- Then you may make sounds like BA, PA, TA, KA, MA, etc.

STAGE III

- When you have mastered the One Breath-One Sound stage start with One Breath –Two SOUNDS AH-AH.
- After achieving the above, try sound like BA-BA, MA-MA, DA-DA, etc.

STAGE IV

When you have mastered in one Breath two sounds then start practicing in one Breath three sounds, like AH- AH-AH.

STAGE V

After learning to produce the above vowel AH then try other vowels like E, I, O, U.

STAGE VI

Join the vowels with consonants like P, B, M, etc. and start getting two letter words and then three letter words. After achieving this, produce two words on a Belch. In this way one would learn to speak.