

What is Muscle Tension Dysphonia?



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Muscle tension dysphonia is a condition that is associated with excessive muscular tension or muscle misuse. In the past, this condition has been described as *laryngeal tension-fatigue syndrome*, *functional dysphonia*, and is now commonly called *muscle tension dysphonia*. This can be the only presenting diagnosis or this can be a secondary issue as a compensatory response to something else going on in the larynx, such as a weakness (paresis or paralysis of one or both vocal folds), a vocal fold pathology (cyst, nodule, or other vocal fold mass), having a virus, or even just having laryngopharyngeal reflux.

Videostroboscopic Findings:

- Your vocal folds do not close all the way
- Squeezing of your vocal folds when you go to make sound
- Squeezing of your “false vocal folds” around your vocal folds when you go to make sound
- Inability to view the full length of the vocal folds
- Squeezing from the front of your throat to the back so you cannot see the front or back of your vocal folds (we call that the “Bogart-Bacall Syndrome”)
- Normal laryngeal structures but vocal folds are held away from the midline during phonation (you can laugh, cough, grunt) resolves with therapy
- Bowed vocal folds-resolves with voice therapy
- Tense glottis and high laryngeal position

Treatment

Voice Therapy

- Stretching and relaxation exercises

- Direct massage of compensatory muscles
- Replacement of compensatory tension with abdominal support
- Digital manipulation and reposturing techniques of the larynx
- Laryngeal articulation exercises to strengthen weakness of laryngeal muscles