

Health Info to know with Dr. Joe

*Expert advice with Head and Neck Surgeon,
University of Florida Associate Professor,
Dr. Joe Parell.*

*Dr. Parell is board certified in Otolaryngology and
board certified in Facial Plastic Surgery.*

Q: I've been experiencing hoarseness for the past six weeks. Should I be placed on antibiotics?

A: It is unlikely that an infection would have lasted this long, so an antibiotic will not help. However, hoarseness lasting more than two weeks is not to be taken lightly.

If you are a smoker, throat cancer is a possible cause, so you should make an appointment with an ear, nose and throat specialist soon. Another common, but often overlooked, cause of hoarseness is reflux (regurgitation of stomach acid into the throat). You may not even be aware you suffer from the condition because it commonly occurs during sleep.

An additional common cause is snoring. This dries the throat and causes inflammation of the vocal cords. Papilloma (warts), screamer's nodules (calluses on the vocal cords) and allergy may also cause hoarseness.

Diagnosis of your condition can often be made with a simple office procedure in which the vocal cords are examined with a mirror or a fiber optic scope. X rays of the esophagus (barium swallow) will help diagnose reflux. A sleep study can also determine the seriousness of one's snoring. Occasionally a biopsy of the vocal cords under anesthesia may be necessary.

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