

Gal Levy M.S., CCC-SLP
Speech Pathologist
(214) 995-6444
galslp@gmail.com

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Dear Doctor / Colleague,

This letter will shed some light on:

The aging voice and the art of voice therapy.

Aging has vast effects on our body, and as a part of that process our voice gets its own share. Lots of elderly patients come to my voice clinic ,some after operations, some due to hoarseness and vocal output problems secondary to neurological diseases like Parkinson or post CVA, and some with overall good health that complain about their voice.

That last portion is called Presbyphonia or the aging voice disorder.

Simply put, if the patient is in good health, does not use medications and still complains about his vocal output we encounter Presbyphonia.

Presbyphonia is a result of the anatomical and physiological changes that happen while aging:

- 1. Decrease of use and respiratory volume of the respiration system.**
- 2. Decrease of musculature tonus that changes the position of the body.**
- 3. Presbylaryngs = aging of the larynx : rising stiffness of the joints and cartilages, lower tonus of the vocal muscles, decreases in collagen, and adjacent vocal cord mucosa change : thinner for men, thicker for women.**
- 4. Stroboscopy examination by your ENT will show: bowing of vocal folds, open glottis during phonation, open rear 1/3 of glottis , Hypertrophy or thinning of vocal cords.**

5. Researchers do not agree on the exact age when Presbyphonia is expected to start and numbers in current literature go from the age of 40 to 65.

What do we get?

Hoarseness, pitch breaks, devoicing, lower volume and tremulous voice may be evident. The main complaint would be lack of social communication due to weak voice. Interestingly, there might be rising pitch (rise of basic tone) with aging men, while decreasing pitch (lower basic tone) with aging women. (Errands 2002).

The good news:

Voice therapy is very effective for Presbyphonia. Glottal position will be targeted by special vocal cord physiotherapy. Good vocal hygiene is a must. Breath support techniques will improve respiratory capacity as well as vocal volume and production.

It is good practice for the speech pathologist to teach the patient how to project his voice thus improving volume without putting more effort on the vocal mechanism.

Practice makes perfect!

It has been shown that singers and actors that remain active could produce good clear and loud voices at the ages of 70's and 80's (Colton & Casper 1996) ... So, good voice therapy, good vocal hygiene and good practice while maintaining good health - will most certainly improve any aging voice condition.

I trust you have gained some insight from this educational note. I appreciate the opportunity of being of service to you and your patients. Please e-mail me at galslp@gmail.com if you would like this or previous information to be sent to you via e-mail in a digital format. You are also invited to pay a visit to my website: www.galwave.biz

Thank you,

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