

Laryngeal Clefts

Center for Pediatric Aerodigestive
Disorders and Airway Surgery

What is it?



A condition that occurs before birth where an abnormal communication is created between the **larynx (voice box)** and **esophagus (food pipe)**. This can result in liquids passing through the larynx and into the **trachea (windpipe)** or even into the lungs. A laryngeal cleft can create various difficulties with drinking, breathing problems, or lead to frequent lung infections.

Four Different Types: Type I (Most Common) to Type IV (Most Severe)

Type I

The wall behind the vocal folds is incompletely formed to the level of the vocal folds which may allow food or liquids to pass into the lungs.

Type II

The wall behind the vocal folds as well as a **portion** of cartilage of the voice box is incompletely formed which allows food or liquids to pass into the lungs.

Type III

The wall behind the vocal folds and some of the wall that separates the food pipe from the windpipe is incompletely formed which allows food or liquids to pass into the lungs.

Type IV

The wall behind the vocal folds as well as the cartilage and most or all of the wall that separates the food pipe from the windpipe is incompletely formed which allows food or liquids to pass into the lungs.

Symptoms



- Difficulty feeding
- Choking episodes
- Chronic cough
- Stridor (noisy breathing)
- Recurrent respiratory tract infections

Evaluation



A Videofluoroscopic Swallow Study (Dysphagia Study) and/or Flexible Endoscopic Evaluation of Swallow (FEES) may be recommended to assess your child's anatomy, airway protection and swallowing skills. If there is a concern for dysfunction, further evaluation of this area under anesthesia may be recommended (i.e. airway endoscopy or triple scopes).

Treatment

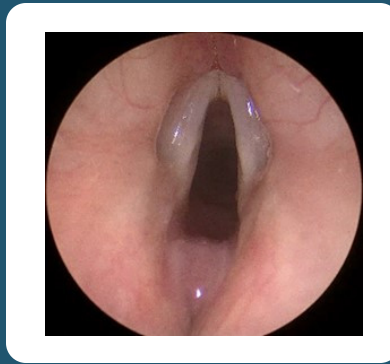


Depending on severity, in addition to feeding therapy, a surgical intervention may be recommended. If your child undergoes surgery, they will likely stay in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit overnight for monitoring.

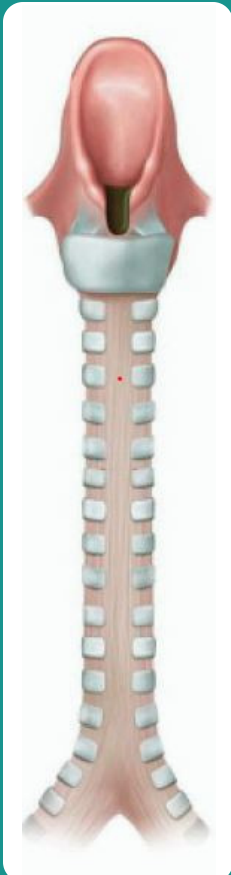
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Normal Vocal Cords



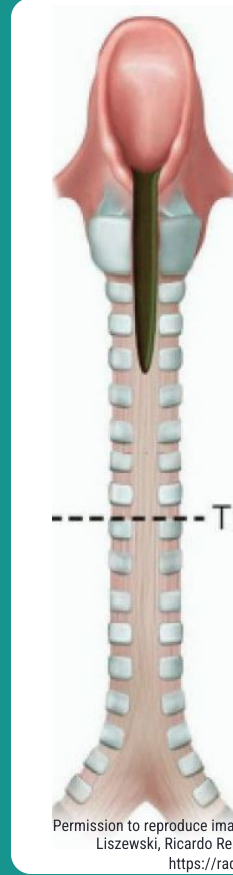
Type I



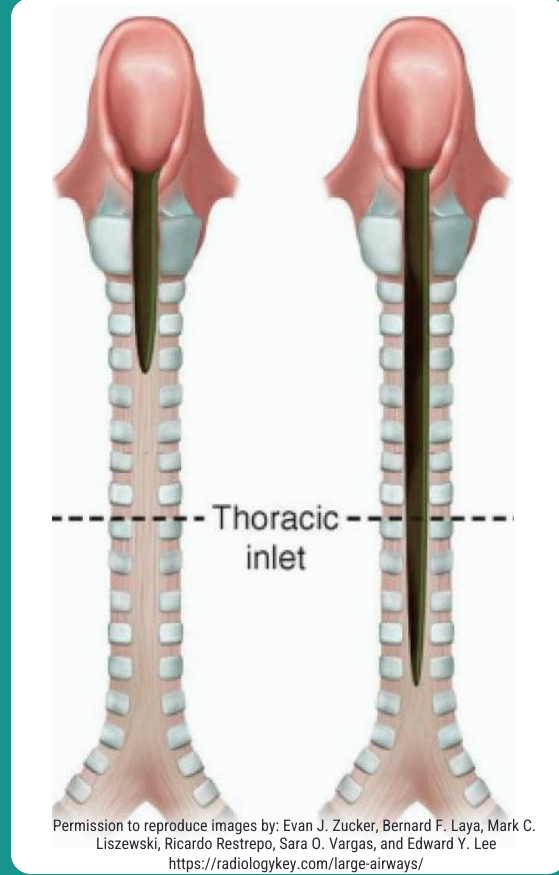
Type II



Type III



Type IV



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