
Greenville Ear, Nose & Throat

Behavioral Program to Stem Paradoxical Vocal Fold Motion

To decrease or eliminate paradoxical vocal fold motion (PVFM), please perform the exercises that follow in the sequence below. **Practice these exercises 3-4 times a day for 5 minutes.**

Set aside dedicated time for these three steps. For a child with PVFM, caregivers and educators should arrange quiet, uninterrupted time that will maximize the child's ability to focus on these steps.

Note: Only Step 3 will be used during an actual breathing attack.

Step 1: Tightening/Relaxing Exercise

Developing an awareness of muscle/throat tightness and learning to relax these muscles are key to alleviating breathing difficulty. Discovering additional physical information about the body that signals the onset of throat tightness will help the child start breathing exercises before he or she escalates into full PVFM.

Although these exercises may seem designed to promote relaxation, they also help train attention to muscle changes in the body. Follow this exercise sequence as described while seated or lying down. When tightening various muscle groups, hold the tension as tight as possible. The goal is to recognize localized tension and then release the tension to develop better awareness of PVFM triggers.

- Tighten the muscles in your feet. Notice the feeling of tightness in these muscles. Hold the tension for a count of 5. Release the tension and notice the tightness leave your feet. Feel the relaxation in your feet.
- Tighten the muscles in your calves/lower legs. Notice the feeling of tightness in these muscles. Hold the tension for a count of 5. Release the tension and notice the tightness leave your calves. Feel the relaxation in your lower legs.
- Tighten the muscles in your thighs. Notice the feeling of tightness in these muscles. Hold the tension for a count of 5. Release the tension and notice the tightness leave your legs. Feel the relaxation in your legs.

- Tighten the muscles of your buttocks. Notice the feeling of tightness in the muscles. Hold the tension for a count of 5. Release the tension and notice the tightness leave your buttocks. Feel the relaxation. Notice the difference between tightness and relaxation.
- Tighten the muscles of your hands by making fists. Notice the feeling of tightness in your hands. Hold the tension for a count of 5. Release the tension and notice the tightness leave your hands. Feel the relaxation in your hands. Notice the difference between tightness and relaxation.
- Tighten the muscles in your shoulders by shrugging your shoulders up toward your ears. Notice the feeling of tightness in your shoulders. Hold the tension for a count of 5. Release the tension and notice the tightness leave your shoulders. Feel the relaxation in your shoulders. Notice the difference between tightness and relaxation.
- Tighten the muscles in your jaw by clenching your teeth. Notice the feeling of tightness in your jaw muscles. Hold the tension for a count of 5. Release the tension and notice the tightness leave your jaw. Feel the relaxation in your mouth and jaw. Notice the difference between tightness and relaxation.
- Tighten the muscles of your tongue by sticking your tongue out of your mouth as far as possible. Notice the feeling of tightness in the muscles of your tongue. Hold the tension for a count of 5. Release the tension by letting your tongue relax and rest heavy inside your mouth. Feel the relaxation in your tongue. Notice the difference between tightness and relaxation.
- Purse your lips. Notice the feeling of tightness in the muscles of your lips. Hold the tension for a count of 5. Release the tension in these muscles and notice the tightness leave your lips. Feel the relaxation in your lips. Notice the difference between tightness and relaxation.
- Raise your eyebrows and feel the tightness in your forehead. Hold for a count of 5. Lower your eyebrows and feel the tension leave your forehead. Notice the difference between tightness and relaxation.

Note: Tightening of the throat area is not included as it is the authors' experience that many children are concerned that doing so may trigger PVFM.

