

Children's Ear Nose & Throat Center

Sub-specialists of Dell Children's Medical Center of Central Texas

A member of the  Seton Healthcare Family

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Velopharyngeal dysfunction (VP)

Velopharyngeal dysfunction (VP) is a general term. It is used to describe different disorders of the velopharyngeal valve, including:

- velopharyngeal insufficiency (VPI)
- velopharyngeal incompetence (VLI)
- velopharyngeal mislearning

Velopharyngeal Dysfunction and Speech

Velopharyngeal dysfunction can cause the following speech characteristics:

- Hypernasality, which is too much sound in the nose during speech
- Nasal emission of air during consonant production
- Weak or omitted consonants due to inadequate air pressure in the mouth
- Short utterance length due to the loss of air pressure through the nasal cavity (nose)
- Compensatory articulation productions (speech sounds produced in a different way to compensate for the lack of air pressure in the mouth)

Treatment of Velopharyngeal Dysfunction

The treatment of a resonance disorder or velopharyngeal dysfunction depends on the type and cause of the problem. If the problem is due to velopharyngeal mis-learning, speech therapy alone will correct the abnormal speech. The treatment of velopharyngeal insufficiency or velopharyngeal incompetence usually requires a surgical procedure (tonsillectomy, pharyngeal flap, sphincter pharyngoplasty, or posterior pharyngeal wall implant). Although surgery is usually needed for VPI, the surgery does not change the way the child has already learned to talk. Therefore, postoperative speech therapy is usually required to help the child learn how to use the corrected structure and produce sounds correctly. If therapy is necessary, the speech pathologist on our team will advise the child's current therapist on effective methods of treatment.

Websites on VPI Disorders

- **Resonance disorders and velopharyngeal dysfunction**
- **Cleft Palate Foundation- Cleftline: <http://www.cleftline.org/>**