A 29-year-old woman found what looked like a balloon inside her mouth when she checked her mouth with a mirror after a dental check-up. There was no symptom except the “balloon” behind her tongue; she was surprised and worried about the strange experience. She had no history of drinking or smoking.

We examined her using an oral pharyngeal scope [1] and at first could not find any abnormality inside her mouth. However, when she answered “OK,” she strained her tongue forcefully and the “balloon” suddenly appeared on the right-side, behind the base of the tongue (▶ Video 1).

Using an electrolaryngeal fiberscope, the “balloon” appeared from her vallecula when she strained her tongue (▶ Fig. 1) and did not appear at any other time. During Valsalva maneuvers (▶ Fig. 2) the balloon disappeared, which suggested that air filled sacs did not communicate with the laryngeal lumen. Computed tomography imaging (▶ Fig. 3) showed an air-filled space between the base of the tongue and the epiglottis.

The most common congenital laryngeal cysts include saccular cysts, laryngoceles, and ductal cysts [2,3]. A saccular cyst closed from the laryngeal lumen presents as a cyst of the lateral larynx, the so-called congenital cyst or lateral saccular cyst [2]. Our suspected diagnosis was thyro-tongue duct cyst. Complete resection for such cases is recommended as the surgical outcome is excellent [3]. However, after 12 years, the patient has never agreed with surgery because her child was still young and the “balloon” caused no ill effects over these 12 years.

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Competing interests

None
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