

Maintaining a Healthy Voice

Each of us has a unique voice. Voice is produced by the vibration of the vocal cords as air from the lungs flows between them. The sound is shaped as it passes the throat, palate, tongue, teeth and lips. Our voices can reveal if we are upset, happy, ill or even our gender. We use our voices countless times every day, so practicing good voice health is important.

Here are some suggestions:

What to Avoid	What to do Instead
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • habitual throat clearing and coughing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ drink water, swallow, hum, cough silently
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • speaking over background noise or from a long distance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ turn down noise or move to a quieter location ◊ be within an arm's length of your conversation partner ◊ use an intercom system or walkie-talkies between rooms at home
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • yelling, screaming and cheering • making unusual noises (animal noises, special effects, forced whispering or harsh laughing) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ use noise makers, clapping, foot stomping or hand signals to get someone's attention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • talking too fast, too loud, too high or too low or when you are almost out of air 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ speak within a comfortable pitch range, keeping muscles relaxed in the shoulders, neck, jaw, tongue and face ◊ breathe easily and often to replenish air supply for talking ◊ use abdominal breath support to produce your voice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clenching your jaw or teeth • holding the telephone between your shoulder and chin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ allow easy and open jaw movements ◊ consider using a telephone headset
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • talking or singing to large groups without a microphone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ use an amplification system adequate for the room
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • talking too much • talking a lot when you are ill or when your voice is already strained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ schedule rest breaks for your voice throughout the day ◊ reduce talking time and effort



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • caffeinated beverages and food (including pop, coffee, tea, chocolate and alcohol) as these may dry the throat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ drink 7 - 10 glasses of water a day ◊ choose non-caffeinated drinks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • any foods that give you heartburn or acid reflux (backflow of stomach acid can damage the vocal mechanism) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ give yourself 2 - 3 hours before lying down after eating if you are prone to heartburn ◊ consult a physician if you experience frequent hoarseness, heartburn or a lump in the throat feeling
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using throat lozenges (these may numb the throat and mask a problem) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ suck a non-medicated hard candy ◊ drink water
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • smoking, second-hand smoke and other air pollutants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ don't smoke ◊ avoid polluted environments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • excessive stress and emotional upsets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ practice relaxation techniques for your body, particularly the head, neck, jaw and shoulders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if you sing, avoid singing beyond a comfortable pitch or loudness range 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ warm up your voice, starting softly with mid and low pitches, then gradually go higher and louder

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