

Pamphlets on Professional Voice Care

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Eight guidelines to keep you talking/singing....

1. **Repeated throat clearing or coughing may damage the vocal fold tissues.** Sipping of water, dry swallow (swallowing saliva) or gargling with warm saline water may relieve the irritation in the throat.
2. **Smoking may be a cause of laryngeal cancer.** At the very least, smoking irritates tissues used for singing and talking. **Don't smoke!**
3. **Coffee and alcohol dehydrates (dries out) the vocal folds, which can cause tissue damage.** Drink plenty of water to prevent their drying effects.
4. **Speaking loudly most frequently may lead to voice disorder.** Identify when your voice is tired. Consider voice training if you have to speak/teach/sing loudly extensively for your occupation. Vocal endurance/stamina like athletics requires special skills.
5. **Some medications lead to dehydration of the vocal folds.** Medications taken for cold or allergies (antihistamines) shrinks or swells mucous membranes of vocal folds and reduce saliva and mucous production. Don't use such medication without medical advice. If you take dehydrating medications, drink lots of water and other fluids. Keep your home and work environments relatively humid (moisture/wetness).
6. **Frequent heartburn and a sour taste may indicate that stomach acids are spilling over into throat, which may lead to voice problems.** If you experience these symptoms, avoid spicy, sour foods and late-night eating. Elevate your head with extra pillows or raise the head of the bed when sleeping.
7. **Stress can lead to forceful and strained voice production, resulting in possible vocal fold tissue damage.** Relaxation techniques can improve your voice and allow you to speak more effectively and for longer duration. Stretching the whole body and deep breathing may also help.
8. **Hoarseness or breathiness may signal voice disorders.** If there is any change in voice that persists for more than one week, consult an ENT doctor or Speech Language Pathologist.

Please contact us if you have any questions...

5 **Professional Voice Care Unit**
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2013

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VOCAL HYGIENE TIPS FOR PROFESSIONAL VOICE USERS



PROFESSIONAL VOICE CARE UNIT



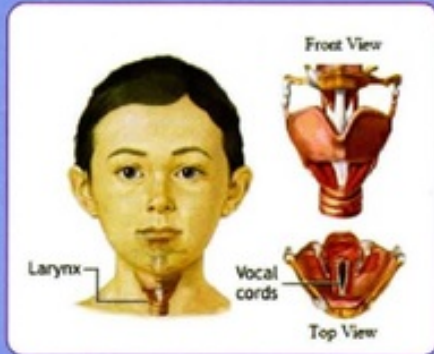
DEPARTMENT OF SPEECH-LANGUAGE SCIENCES

ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF SPEECH & HEARING

MANASAGANGOTHRI

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The human voice is produced by the vibration of vocal cords in the larynx (voice box) which is audible during talking, singing, laughing, crying, screaming, coughing, etc. Anything that interferes with this normal process may cause voice problems.



Voice problems are caused frequently by vocal overuse or misuse. Some vocal habits like prolonged talking, loud talking, shouting, screaming, excessive singing etc are vocal overuse. Mimicry, using false voice are examples of vocal misuse. Along with the changes in life style, stress and strain contributes much for one's voice problem.

1. What is Vocal Hygiene?

It is the set of practices associated with the preservation of healthy voice. It emphasizes the importance of **2** care with respect to suitable voice behaviors, **life style and diets**. **It is an effective method to reduce vocal abuse and prevent the occurrence of voice problems.**

Vocal hygiene is for a positive change—these guidelines/practices will help conserve and maintain good voice.

2. Vocal hygiene tips

Avoid certain food items that can be harmful for voice in the long run. They are:

- a. **Cocoa and dairy products:** Milk, ice-cream, and chocolates – increase the amount of mucous secretions. It causes discomfort and irritation to the throat.
- b. **Spicy foods and beverages:** Highly spiced food, coffee and other beverages containing caffeine also cause throat irritation and leads to frequent

throat clearing. It should be avoided before concert singing, rehearsal, performances, lectures, sermons, teaching etc.,

Instead, water, citrus juice and herbal tea are advised for the beneficial effect of the voice. Water is a good substitute and drink 6-8 glasses of water a day.



c. Alcohol: A history of alcohol abuse is detrimental to vocal apparatus as it causes dryness and irritation to the throat.



d. Drugs: Some professional voice users frequently require antihistamines to help in controlling post-nasal drip or other symptoms. The drying effect of antihistamines may result in decreased vocal cord lubrication, increased throat clearing and irritability leading to frequent coughing and voice problems.

3. How to establish good vocal hygiene?

Avoid throat clearing: it is traumatic to the vocal cords and should be eliminated. Instead, other alternatives are useful like,

- a. Dry swallow:** The mucus on the vocal cords gets cleared during swallowing. It also relaxes and gives soothing effect to the larynx.
- b. Silent cough:** During silent cough, the strong air blows mucus off from the vocal cords, if any. It

can be achieved by pushing air through the vocal cords as you are producing 'ha' sound.

Hum lightly, laugh or giggle lightly/gently followed by a dry swallow.

Take small sip of water and swallow slowly.

- c. Avoid Whispering:** Whispering strains the vocal cords and should be avoided.



- d. Avoid grunting/noisy vocalization:** Speaking while lifting heavy objects or exercising should be avoided as it is harmful for the larynx.



- e. Avoid screaming, shouting or yelling:** while doing so, the edges of the vocal cords become rough. Instead, use gestures or actions and noise makers for gaining attention.



- f. Inadequate rest/sleep pattern:** Inadequate rest and sleep patterns are harmful for good voice. Instead get adequate rest/sleep prior to any important performance or speaking commitments.

- g. Noisy environments:** Avoid speaking in noisy situations. Instead, face the listener while speaking, over articulate or do exaggerated movements of



articulators instead of increasing loudness. Use public address systems.

h. Environmental dryness: Environmental factors such as humidity, heat, extreme temperature can create drying effect on the vocal folds. Instead, use a humidifier if possible or minimize the amount of talking in such places.

i. Stress management strategies: In day-to-day life, many voice users experience tremendous stress/tension.

The following tips may help to reduce/overcome tension/stress :

- Practice deep breathing
- Be happy & Cheerful
- Practice relaxation techniques
- Learn proper time management
- Get required amount of sleep
- Practice simple physical exercises
- Eat healthy food

Helpful hints for a healthy voice:

- ➔ Drink minimum 6-8 glass of water per day
- ➔ Use yawning to relax your throat
- ➔ Use non-vocal sounds to attract the attention of listener(s) like whistle, clap, horn, bell, when they are far
- ➔ Use amplification device to address large audience
- ➔ Speak slowly, pause often at natural phrase boundaries so you can breath naturally
- ➔ Know your vocal limits for pitch and loudness and try to be within your vocal limits
- ➔ Keep water handy while singing, and lecturing
- ➔ Minimize talking in noisy places and over telephone
- ➔ Maintain 10 to 15 minutes of silence after continuous prolonged talking
- ➔ Take adequate physical rest, as well as voice rest
- ➔ For public speaking, practice the material well in advance. It helps in good pronunciation as well as

good delivery of the material

- ➔ Be a good listener
- ➔ Don't hold your breath and speak.
- ➔ Avoid speaking or singing beyond a natural breath cycle or comfortable range.
- ➔ Avoid imitating famous personalities, animal or machine or vehicle sounds/noises.
- ➔ If you find any change in your voice, don't ignore it. Consult an ENT doctor or Speech-Language Pathologist or Speech/Voice therapist immediately.
- ➔ Don't ignore prolonged symptoms of throat pain, throat irritation/fullness, heartburn, vocal strain, voice change, hoarseness etc., Consult a qualified professionals mentioned above.



For further clarification and queries please contact us

You can also send your queries to the following
e-mail address :
speech_sls@yahoo.co.in

Consultation available every Wednesday
between 2 pm to 5 pm.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Professional Voice Care unit

A graphic of a musical staff with five black notes, positioned below the word 'unit' in the 'Professional Voice Care unit' title.

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Department of Speech-Language Sciences

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1. What are singer's or teacher's nodules?

Vocal nodule are small calluses (toughened area of mucous membrane which becomes thin and hard in response to repeated pressure, friction or other irritation). When singers or teachers misuse/overuse their voice by using inappropriate techniques, inappropriate pitch or loudness consistently, it may result in nodules on the vocal folds called as singer's nodules for singers and teacher's nodule for teachers. It is seen in both males and females but predominantly in females.

2. I have heard that drinking water is good for my voice, is this true? If so, how much?

Yes, drinking water helps in maintaining the moisture content in the vocal folds through systemic circulation and reduces the chance of damage. Vocal folds vibrate 100-400 times/second against each other which requires constant lubrication. Hence, it is recommended that 2-3 sips of normal water be taken for every half an hour during working hours.

3. What is Voice therapy?

Voice therapy is a training to regain the normal voice quality through various techniques. It involves patient centered treatment methods to modify behaviors which contribute to voice disorders.

4. Does heart burn and stomach acid affect my voice?

Yes, heart burn and stomach acid, when high, might lead to vocal irritation leading to voice problems. It can be prevented by modifying/controlling, type and amount of food intake & maintaining proper time

5. Does smoking affect my voice?

Yes, smoking affects your voice by reducing the moisture levels, and drying the lining of the vocal folds, thereby increasing the chances of damage.

6. What can be done for paralysed vocal folds?

In case of paralyzed vocal folds one has to consult an ENT doctor or SLP. Then they may have to attend voice therapy

recommended by the ENT doctor. Voice therapy results in restoration of near normal speaking voice quality by optimizing paralyzed vocal folds movements and maximizing the voice production.

7. My voice is weak. Can something be done to make it stronger?

Yes, you can learn certain facilitating or compensatory techniques or use devices (amplifiers) according to your speaking necessities. This will be taught in voice therapy.

8. What are some indications that I may have vocal problem?

If you have a voice problem you might be experiencing irritation, pain in the throat, cough change in the quality of voice, inability to vary the voice, shortness of breath, dryness, breaks in voice, etc.

9. Can drugs and medication cause problems in the larynx?

Yes, a number of medication can cause problems in larynx including, aspirins,

Antihistamines, marijuana, steroids, thyroid drugs, hypertension drugs etc. Certain drugs and medications which are lifesaving and drugs used for respiratory and abdominal problems may cause voice problems too.

10. Can voice problems related to substance abuse result in cancer?

Yes, substances (tobacco, marijuana, nicotine) abuse might increase the risk of developing cancer.

11. When should one seek attention for a voice problem?

If you experience voice changes that persist more than one week or more without improvement, also, swallowing difficulty and/or breathing problems if you experience consult your physician immediately.

12. Who is at risk for getting a vocal problem/ voice disorder?

Individuals who are professional voice users like teachers, singers, and artists, individuals who are chronic

smokers and consume drugs, individuals who overuse their voice, those who work in noisy environment or misuse the voice are at a higher risk of developing a voice disorder/problem.

For further clarification and queries please contact the address mentioned in this handout

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