



VOCAL HYGIENE

What is Vocal Hygiene?

Vocal hygiene is a term used to describe habits, which support a healthy and strong voice throughout your life. Just as good oral hygiene can help protect your teeth as you AGE, vocal hygiene can help you preserve a resonant voice into your 60s, 70s, and beyond. Good voice habits are also used by speech therapists to help rehabilitate a damaged voice.

What Does Good Vocal Hygiene Consist of?

- 1. Increase consumption of liquids--**Aim for a minimum of eight 8 oz glasses of water or other non-caffeinated non-acidic beverage per day. Chewing gum or sucking on a lozenge may help lubricate a very dry throat.
- 2. Avoid alcohol--** Alcohol dehydrates the larynx and causes the larynx to produce mucous that will quickly thicken and need to be cleared.
- 3. Increase awareness of throat clearing--** Habitual throat clearing can result in accumulation of fluid in vocal fold tissue, which, in turn, makes vocal folds more susceptible to bruising and irritation. It also can cause pain and affect the voice.
If you feel much mucous in your throat and the need to clear your throat, you should swallow, do a breathy throat clear or a controlled cough
Also, gargling with tepid water in the morning will loosen accumulated mucous in the throat. If your voice sounds scratchy when you first begin to speak, gargle some more and drink a glass or two of water.
- 4. Use a moderate, conversational level of loudness.**
Don't whisper. Never shout. Always be within reaching distance of the person you are speaking to; always face your listener.
- 5. Don't smoke--**Smoking is the ultimate in voice abuse and can cause cancer of the vocal cords as well as many other sites.
- 6. Avoid irritating environments--** Environments that contain tobacco smoke, auto exhaust, strong smells such as chemical fumes, or products to which you are allergic or sensitive, will irritate the breathing and speaking mechanism and make them more susceptible to damage.
- 7. Know the effects of posture and exercise--** The position or posture of head, neck, and upper torso and the amount of tension there affects the vocal mechanism. Exercise is helpful, but be sure not to grunt.
- 8. Evaluate singing-** Do not sing when you are hoarse, have vocal fatigue or other vocal problems. Warm up before singing.
- 9. Avoid spicy food--**Eating spicy food, and/or alcohol, particularly shortly before going to bed, can produce gastric reflux, which irritates the vocal tract.
- 10. Limit amount of talking--**If your voice feels tired or strained, this is an important signal that you should give it a rest. Do not speak louder or with more effort to push voice out despite the feeling of strain.
- 11. Breathe--**Don't talk faster or push words out with strain so that you can finish entire thoughts in one breath.