



## YOUR CHECKLIST TO GOOD VOCAL HEALTH

- ✓ Drink plenty of water. Six to eight glasses a day is recommended.
- ✓ Limit your intake of drinks that include alcohol or caffeine. These act as diuretics and cause the body to lose water. This loss of fluids dries out the voice. Alcohol also irritates the mucous membranes that line the throat.
- ✓ Use a humidifier in your home. This is especially important in winter or in dry climates. Thirty percent humidity is recommended.
- ✓ Include plenty of whole grains, fruits, and vegetables in your diet. These foods contain vitamins A, E, and C. They also help keep the mucus membranes that line the throat healthy.
- ✓ Get enough rest. Physical fatigue has a negative effect on the voice.
- ✓ Don't smoke and avoid second-hand smoke. Cancer of the vocal folds is seen most often in individuals who smoke. Stay away from smoky bars and restaurants.
- ✓ Avoid breathing in irritants (perfumes, dust, chemicals).
- ✓ Be kind to your voice, avoid screaming.
- ✓ Avoid talking in noisy places. Trying to talk above noise causes strain on the voice.
- ✓ Avoid clearing your throat (swallow or sip water instead).
- ✓ Try not to overuse your voice. Avoid speaking or singing when your voice is hoarse.
- ✓ Use a silent cough.
- ✓ Speak in a clear, easy tone.
- ✓ Exercise regularly. Exercise increases stamina and muscle tone. This helps provide good posture and breathing, which are necessary for proper speaking.
- ✓ Keep airflow smooth during exercise (no grunting).
- ✓ Practice good breathing techniques when singing or talking. It is important to support your voice with deep breaths from the diaphragm. Singers and speakers are often taught exercises that improve this breath control. Talking from the throat, without supporting breath, puts a great strain on the voice.
- ✓ Avoid eating spicy foods. Spicy foods can cause stomach acid to move into the throat or esophagus (reflux).
- ✓ Also avoid fried foods, chocolate, acidic foods and dairy products.
- ✓ **DO NOT LIE DOWN AFTER YOU EAT. WAIT 3 HOURS BEFORE GOING TO SLEEP.**
- ✓ Do not cradle the phone when talking. Cradling the phone between the head and shoulder for extended periods of time can cause muscle tension in the neck. No

talking on the cell phone while driving in the car. The ambient noise from surrounding traffic and trying to talk over the radio can damage the voice.

- ✓ Avoid mouthwash or gargles that contain alcohol or irritating chemicals. If you still wish to use a mouthwash that contains alcohol, limit your use to oral rinsing. If gargling is necessary, use a salt water solution.
- ✓ Avoid using mouthwash to treat persistent bad breath. Halitosis (bad breath) may be the result of a problem that mouthwash can't cure, such as low grade infections in the nose, sinuses, tonsils, gums, or lungs, as well as from gastric reflux from the stomach.
- ✓ Check with your doctor about which of your medications may affect your voice
- ✓ Consider voice therapy. A speech-language pathologist who is experienced in treating voice problems can provide education on healthy use of the voice and instruction in proper vocal techniques.



**DO NOT IGNORE CHANGES IN VOCAL QUALITY, SUCH AS:**

- Breathiness
- Raspiness / Hoarseness
- Lowered vocal pitch
- Loss of range
- Vocal fatigue (losing your voice by the end of the day)
- Pain in the laryngeal area (throat) when speaking and singing

**ACTION:**

- **If any change in voice quality persists for more than one week, be evaluated with videostroboscopy.**
- **If you have a sudden loss of voice, rest your voice for 1-3 days. If no improvement, seek evaluation from an ENT that specializes in voice disorders.**

- Remember, it is not normal to lose your voice or have a change in vocal quality, and could be a warning sign of something more serious.



### STANDARD RULES FOR COLD

1. Get plenty of rest.
2. Speak as little as possible. Do not sing if possible.
3. Drink plenty of fluids (water). This reduces fever, avoids vocal fold dehydration and makes the mucous secretions thinner.
4. Use a cool mist humidifier as needed.
5. Ask your doctor about nasal care.
6. If you need to cough make it breathy.
7. Guaifenesin (Mucinex, Robitussin) can help thin secretions and formulations with Dextromethorphan (DM) can help

Remember, your voice is the only instrument you have so treat it with the care and the respect it deserves, and it will serve you well throughout the years as you continue to educate and impact our youth.