

Voice Care

How to Take Good Care of Your Voice



Allina Health

General Information

You might not think about it, but your voice is important. Taking good care of your voice makes it more likely that you will have a healthy voice every day.

Drink Lots of Water Every Day and Other Tips


You probably already know that drinking water every day is good for you. It's also good for your vocal cords (or vocal folds).

Vocal folds that are moist vibrate more easily. They don't injure as easily as dry vocal folds can.

- Try to drink half of your weight in ounces of water. If you weigh 150 pounds, drink 75 ounces of water.
- Flavor the water by adding fruit (such as slices of cucumber, lemon or lime) or sugar-free drink mixes.
- Drink liquids that don't have caffeine.
- Eat foods that contain a lot of water (such as soups, grapes, cucumbers or melons).
- Pass often on drinks that are sweetened with sugar or that aren't 100 percent fruit juice. Stay away from any drink that causes you to clear your throat.
- Watch how much caffeine and alcohol you drink. They can dry out your throat.
- If you are drinking enough, your urine will be clear or pale yellow.
- In the winter, consider using a humidifier. Be sure to follow the package directions for use and cleaning.
- Sit in a warm shower and breathe in the steam for 10 to 15 minutes a day. If you use a facial steamer, follow the package directions.

Protect Your Vocal Folds From Irritation

Even if you drink enough water, it's important to keep your vocal folds away from things that can irritate them.

- ❑ Avoid all forms of tobacco and nicotine: smoking, secondhand smoke, vaping and smokeless tobacco. Tobacco use irritates your vocal folds and this can lead to chronic (long-term) swelling and cancer.
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- ❑ Avoid air pollutants. If the air quality is poor, avoid going outside or wear a face mask.
 - ❑ If you are working with chemicals (such as paint, paint-thinner or deck stain), use a proper face mask. You may need one with a carbon filter.
 - ❑ Some medicines can irritate your throat. Talk with your health care provider if medicines cause you irritation.
 - ❑ Some health conditions, like reflux, can irritate your throat. Talk with your health care provider for ways to treat the irritation.
 - ❑ Do not sing for 24 hours after vomiting (throwing up).
 - ❑ If you get laryngitis, don't talk. You can cause more harm if you don't get enough rest and take care of yourself.

Don't Overuse Your Voice

Making changes to your voice — or the loudness of it — can harm your vocal folds.

- Don't shout, yell or scream unless you or others around you are in harm's way.
- Don't sing loudly or try to do an impression of someone else.
- If you sing on a regular basis:
 - Warm up and cool down your voice to gently stretch the vocal folds. If you don't do warm ups and cool downs, consider gentle humming with a relaxed throat in a comfortable part of your range.
 - Consider working with a vocal coach.
- If you often give presentations, consider buying a voice-amplification system. You can use this if a public address system isn't available.
- Don't speak with "vocal fry." This is speaking in a croaky, low voice.
- Avoid whispering.
- If you have a day where you need to talk a lot, try to "save your voice" the rest of the day.
- If you have a large presentation or are singing, stay within your natural vocal range.
- If you are trying to talk in a place that is loud, try to move to a quieter spot or meet the person later.
- Breathe properly.
- Embrace silence!

Try To Not Clear Your Throat

Your vocal folds slam together when you clear your throat. If you clear your throat enough, your vocal folds can become irritated and swollen.

Constant throat clearing can lead to a hoarse voice and can even cause masses (bumps) on your vocal fold.

One reason for clearing your throat may be because you feel mucus or something else caught in your throat. Clearing your throat doesn't clear the mucus; it moves the mucus to the side of your vocal folds. The mucus keeps moving back to where it started which restarts the cycle of clearing your throat.

- If you have a cold or the flu, take care of your throat. Drink lots of liquids, and use sugar-free lozenges, gum or candy, to keep your throat moist. Avoid "mentholated" cough drops. Look for throat lozenges that have pectin.
- Talk with your doctor if you have to constantly clear your throat or if you have a cough that doesn't go away.
- If your throat clearing or cough does not clear something from your lungs that you can spit out, try taking some hard swallows of water or saliva (like you're swallowing a golf ball) instead of throat clearing. You can also:
 - Take a sip of water.
 - Suck on ice chips.
 - Use a silent cough. Whisper the word "huh" from your belly and swallow. This is like a cough but without using your voice.
 - Hum on an "M" and then swallow.
 - Use a light, gentle cough (like tapping your vocal folds together) and then swallow.

Take Care of Your Body

Living a healthy lifestyle will help your overall health.

- Get at least 7 hours of sleep each night. Good sleep helps your body's ability to fight off infections (which can cause laryngitis) and lower stress.
- Eat healthful foods. Eat plenty of fresh foods. Avoid eating foods high in salt, fat and cholesterol.
 - Take your time while eating, eat the right portion sizes, stop eating when you feel satisfied and don't eat if you are bored.
- Exercise for at least 30 minutes 5 days a week. Try to exercise for your heart (such as walking, biking or swimming) and for your muscles (such as lifting weights).
 - Talk with your health care provider if you are not used to regular exercise or if you want to start an exercise program.
- Do not use tobacco.
- Drink alcohol responsibly.
- Visit your dentist and health care provider for regular checkups.

What to Do if You Have a Voice Problem

If you think you have a voice problem that lasts longer than 2 weeks, call your health care provider or an otolaryngologist, a provider who has special training in ear, nose and throat care.

You may be referred to a speech-language pathologist who has special training about the voice how and to use it.



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