

A Guide to Vocal Health



Good Ventilation

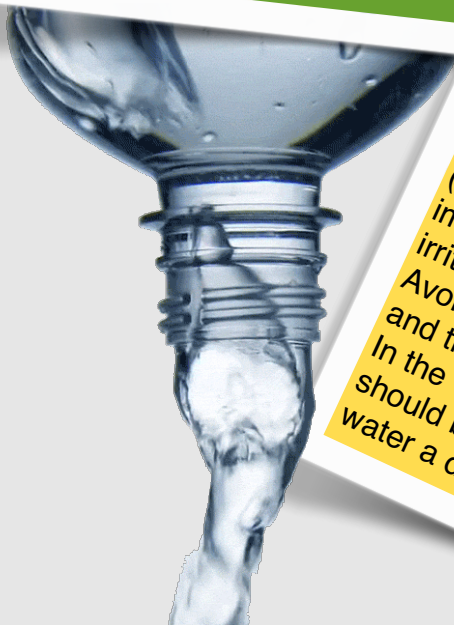
Whatever you are breathing in will affect your voice and throat. Try to keep clear of cigarette smoke and dusty areas. We forget that even having the central heating on will dry out the air and your voice will dehydrate and suffer from this! You can put bowls of water on the radiator or purchase a mini humidifier. Plenty of fresh air is also a treat for the lungs so keep your environment well ventilated by opening windows.

Quality Sleep

When your body is fatigued then your voice is too! Lack of sleep could result in a lack of clarity, volume, diminishing tone quality and over time could cause damage and strain. **8 hours** is the recommended amount of sleep required to help maintain optimum voice quality.

Keep Well Watered!

Keeping your voice and body hydrated with (preferably filtered) water is one of the most important tips! The vocal folds can become irritated and lead to swelling and redness. Avoid ice as this can shock the vocal cords and they will tighten up! In the UK the NHS recommends that we should be drinking **around 1.2 litres** of water a day (roughly 6-8 glasses).



Your vocal cords are delicate and unique and sometimes infections or excessive use causes damage to the voice, which may require medical attention. Here are the top ten tips to help you maintain a healthy voice!



Warm-Up

It is important that we stretch and relax the muscles before we sing, just like an athlete would warm-up the body before physical exercise. Without a warm-up the voice will sound wispy and flat. A gentle warm-up loosens the vocal muscles, removes excess mucous and reduces the risk of injury. Gentle humming is a good start.

Sore Throat

Should you suffer from a tender throat it doesn't necessarily mean that you can't sing. If your voice is hurting then you need to rest and hydrate it more than usual. Before a gig or teaching take lozenges as these can help however, it is advised to avoid antiseptic lozenges as these numb the vocal cords and could potentially cause more damage as you need to be able to feel your throat!

Wear a Scarf

Sudden changes in temperatures can cause havoc to the voice. Wear a scarf... woolly in winter and silk in the summer!



Remedy Drink

Hot water with lemon, ginger and honey is a recommended drink as the lemon contains vitamin C which cleanses and breaks down phlegm. The ginger reduces inflammation and the honey soothes and lubricates the vocal cords.

No Shouting!

Your voice is delicate! Raising your voice suddenly will cause distress and put huge strain to the vocal cords, especially if you haven't warmed up! There are obvious times when you may need to raise your voice especially if you have children! Just be aware and refrain from raising your voice unless you really need to!

Healthy Eating

A good diet not only promotes good health, it is also great for the voice. Plenty of fruit and vegetables have a high water content which helps to hydrate the voice.

- Food and drink to avoid:
- Stodgy foods
- Caffeine and alcohol
- Dairy
- Chocolate
- Anything that creates mucous



Steaming

Facial steamers are a singers best friend! There are many steamers available to purchase however, you can make your own steamer using a bowl, tea towel and hot water. Steaming is an effective way to relieve sore throat and loosen mucous in the nose, throat and lungs.