

SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY

Voice and Vocal Hygiene for Adults

Your voice is a very personal part of you. Once it is injured, it can be very difficult to “get your old voice back”. Caring for your voice means paying attention to the signals your voice gives you before it becomes seriously affected.

Voice Use – Dos and Don’ts

DON'T	DO
Regularly clear your throat or cough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sip water; swallow slowly • Yawn to relax your throat • Hum: Concentrate on feeling the sound in your nose and cheeks
Regularly yell, cheer or scream habitually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use visual strategies to get attention, not your voice • Find ways to discipline your child that does not use your voice
Talk over long distances, from another room or outdoors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move closer to the person/people to whom you are talking • Use voice amplification
Talk in noisy situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn down the TV, radio, and other devices • Face the person and stay within 6 feet of that person • Wait until students/audience are quiet • Find ways to get someone’s attention without using your voice
Sing or vocalize beyond your comfortable range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect your vocal limits
Vocalize during strenuous exercise (e.g., talking while out of breath or make repeated “grunts” when weightlifting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wait until your breathing returns to normal before using your voice
Talk in a low-pitched monotone voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power your voice with your breath flow • Allow your pitch to vary when you speak
Hold your breath as you are planning to speak. This can cause tense voice onset (glottal attacks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate your voice starting with breath release (as in “hm”!)

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Tighten your chest, shoulders, neck and throat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relax the muscles of your chest, shoulders, neck and throat • Allow your posture to be aligned (sit/stand upright) • Breathe naturally
Clench your teeth, jaw or tongue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep your upper and lower teeth separated • Let your jaw move freely • Learn relaxation exercises
Speak beyond a natural breath cycle (when you are running out of breath)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak slowly • Pause at natural phrase breaks thus taking more frequent breaths
Regularly use unusual vocal sounds (e.g., whispering, growling, squeaking, imitating animal and machine noises)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn techniques that reduce muscle tension • Keep unusual voices to a minimum • Rest your voice after making unusual voices
Use your voice when it feels strained, hoarse or you experience pain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn to recognize the first signs of vocal fatigue, hoarseness, tension or dryness • Balance voice use with voice rest. Rest your voice when feeling fatigued or tired. • Consult your doctor if these symptoms persist for more than a few days
Expose your voice to pollution and dehydrating agents- cigarettes, chemical fumes, alcohol, caffeine, dry air, smoke	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimize exposure • Drink 2 liters of water daily

Adapted from: Vocal Hygiene - How to Get the Best Mileage from Your Voice (www.pvcrp.com)



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