

ClearSpeech

Vocal Hygiene: first steps in caring for your voice

Voice problems occur when vocal pitch, loudness, or quality are the focus rather than what the speaker is saying. If the speaker experiences pain or discomfort when speaking or singing it is a sign of a significant voice issue. If you have hoarseness, voice change, or discomfort that lasts for more than ten days in the absence of an allergy or cold, you should have an examination by a medical doctor.

Breath is the Foundation for Voice

Good *breath support* means having enough breath to enable desired production of voice. An opera singer need *extraordinary* breath support, but we all need to breathe easily and sufficiently into a relaxed body and use that breath efficiently to make a health sound. The table below lists some other tips.

Don't	Do
Don't clear your throat or cough habitually	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sip some water, swallowing slowly.• Yawn to relax your throat.• Hum: concentrate on resonance sensations.
Don't yell, cheer or scream habitually.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use non-vocal sounds or visual cues to attract attention.
Avoid prolonged talking over long distances and outdoors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Move closer, so you can be heard without yelling, or use a vocal amplification system.• Learn good vocal projection techniques.
Avoid talking in noisy situations: over loud music, office equipment, noisy classrooms, in cars, buses, airplanes, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduce background noise when you speak.• Always face persons you are speaking with.• Position yourself close to your listeners.
Don't try to address large audiences without proper vocal amplification. You should be able to lecture at a comfortable loudness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a high-quality vocal amplification system• Learn good microphone technique.
Don't sing or vocalize beyond your comfortable range.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respect your vocal limits.• Seek professional voice training.
Avoid vocally-abusive nervous habits during public speaking: throat-clearing, breath-holding, speaking quickly, speaking on insufficient breath,	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitor and reduce vocal habits that detract from your presentation.• Prepare your presentation well so you can relax and attend to good vocal production.
Don't speak extensively during strenuous physical exercise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid aggressive vocal "grunts" while lifting weights, or during martial arts.• After aerobic exercise, wait until your breathing can accommodate relaxed voice production.