

Vocal Hygiene: Helpful Hints for a Healthy Voice

Your voice is a working instrument. A few daily habits are the difference between a voice that lasts a career and one that breaks down under pressure.

EJT COMMUNICATION CONSULTANT LLC

Erica Thomas, M.S., CCC-SLP | Speech-Language Pathologist · Neural Conversations

Helpful Hints for a Healthy Voice

Neural Conversations · Erica Thomas, M.S., CCC-SLP

Most people don't think about their voice until something goes wrong with it. These are the daily habits that protect vocal fold tissue before strain becomes injury.

Daily Habits

- ☐ **Aim for 64-80 oz of water daily** (more if you talk for a living — see the guide for professional voice users). Controlled studies have shown water ingestion measurably improves vocal acoustic quality, including reduced strain and longer phonation time.
- ☐ **Avoid excessive or frequent throat clearing.** Sip water instead — clearing repeatedly can injure the vocal cords over time.
- ☐ **Watch for excess cough, mucus, or throat clearing** as a possible sign of an underlying issue such as reflux.
- ☐ **Get plenty of sleep.** Fatigue changes vocal quality and makes the voice sound hoarse.
- ☐ **Use full breath support.** Your lungs power your voice — use them fully rather than speaking on a shallow breath.
- ☐ **Keep sentences shorter.** Speaking until you're out of air forces strain at the end of every sentence.
- ☐ **Minimize alcohol and dairy.** Both can dry the vocal cords or thicken mucus. (Caffeine's effect on the voice is more debated than commonly believed — current research hasn't shown a reliable negative impact for most people, so prioritize hydration and alcohol first.)
- ☐ **Avoid menthol lozenges.** They dry the throat rather than soothing it.
- ☐ **Avoid smoke and noxious fumes.** These irritate and damage vocal cord tissue directly.
- ☐ **Be mindful in loud environments.** Raising your voice over background noise is one of the most common causes of vocal strain.
- ☐ **Watch your posture on the phone.** Head and neck position affects pressure on the vocal cords during calls.

WHEN TO SEE A SPECIALIST

If speaking starts to feel effortful, your throat hurts after use, your voice tires quickly, or you notice cracking — these are signals, not something to push through. Consult a laryngologist or speech-language pathologist.

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