

Vocal hygiene: Helping your voice stay healthy

What is vocal hygiene?

Using your voice too much or in the wrong way can hurt the voice. This is a list of behaviors that promote a healthy voice. This is called vocal hygiene. These may also prevent or take care of some voice problems.

Important note: This information is not a substitute for treatment. If therapy is needed, this information may be used before, during and after therapy.

Behaviors that hurt the voice	Behaviors for a healthy voice
Shouting or yelling	Walk up to the person. Clap, whistle, ring a bell or blow a horn to attract attention.
Screaming, cheering	Use a noise maker, whistle or clap your hands.
Coughing, clearing throat	Swallow or drink water. Or sniff and swallow.
Making animal and vehicle sounds	Play silently. Use a quiet inside voice and use words.
Talking fast	Talk slow and pause often.
Whispering	Use a quiet voice.
Talking loudly or talking too much	Use a quiet or inside voice. Take time to rest your voice.
Talking over loud music or noise	Turn the music or noise down or off. Or go to a quiet area to talk.
Talking at a really high or low pitch	Talk at your normal pitch.
Talking in an angry or excited voice	Wait to calm down and then talk.
Talking to large groups of people without a microphone	Use a microphone for performances.
Singing beyond comfortable range	Get professional voice training. Never sing a note you can't sing quietly.
Eating spicy foods	Avoid or limit spicy foods.
Drinking caffeinated beverages	Avoid caffeine.
Not drinking enough water	Drink lots of water.
Excess mucus in throat	Drink more water. Or if needed, take medicine to decrease mucus.
Shallow breathing when talking	Use abdominal breathing.
Clenching teeth or tensing jaw or tongue	Keep upper and lower teeth slightly apart. Let jaw move freely during speech.

It is important to figure out the times when the voice is being misused. Caregivers should stress the importance of a healthy voice and set a good example. A child will start to use a healthy voice once the vocal behaviors are corrected.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any concerns or if your child has special health care needs not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.