

Vocal Hygiene

1. Avoid situations in which yelling is necessary:
 - Try to develop other ways to communicate other than yelling. Think before a situation arises to prevent added irritation or damage to your vocal cords.
2. Avoid situations, which require talking over noise.
 - Turn down TV's or stereos rather than talking over them. Do not try to talk over loud conversations or music at parties, concerts, and sports events. If you must talk in noisy conditions, try to use a conversational volume
 - Move closer to your listener.
 - Write rather than yell.
 - When disciplining children, decide on choices that will prevent you from raising your voice.
3. Avoid harsh coughing and throat clearing.
 - Drink plenty of fluids, especially water, to reduce tickle sensation and thin secretions or mucous.
 - Use the silent cough and throat clearing methods to remove drainage.
 - When you feel that "something is there" but mucous does not move with the silent throat clear, use the "sniff swallow" method or drink water.
4. Avoid holding your breath during exertion or exercise.
 - Heaving lifting, pushing, pulling and other hard activities require forceful closure of the vocal folds.
 - When exerting, exhale. If you cannot exhale and exert, get help. Avoid yelling during aerobic workouts.
5. Avoid smoking, drinking, and smoky environments.
 - Smoke tends to dry out the mucous linings of the throat. Drinking of alcohol, especially right before bedtime, can relax the muscles at the top of the stomach and throat. This may allow stomach acids to escape into the throat, irritating the vocal cords and tissues around them.
6. Drink plenty of fluids with any respiratory problems.
 - Doing so will thin the mucous and keep the mucous linings moist. This reduces dryness and the tickle sensation which also reduces the need to cough.
7. Do not force the voice to talk over hoarseness.

In general, follow these helpful hints:

- Avoid room to room conversations
- Use your feet instead of your vocal cords.
- Use non-vocal methods of gaining someone's attention.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol due to diuretic effects. Avoid smoking and smoking environments.
- Nose-breathe whenever possible.
- Keep water with you during exercise, or when you break into mouth breathing.
- Increase your water intake when taking antihistamines.
- DO NOT whisper.
- Talk softer in volume, but not in a lower pitch.