



## Things TO DO

**DO** use your voice quietly but NOT a whisper – whispering can be damaging to your voice because it puts the vocal cords under a great deal of stress.

**DO** cut down on talking but do not stop speaking all together. Unless you have been advised by a health care professional to totally rest your voice for a period of time, it's necessary to keep the muscles involved in speaking fit and healthy by speaking regularly but quietly.

**DO** drink plenty of soft drinks to keep your throat/mouth moist: water is especially good (healthy adults should drink around two liters per day) but pure fruit juices are also useful – it's best to avoid fizzy drinks that contain caffeine and/or too much sugar.

**DO** eat plenty of fruit – fleshy, watery fruits such as peaches, pears and grapes are ideal.

**DO** relax and try not to worry about your voice. Put aside some time each day for relaxation – this will require a minimum of 20 minutes.

**DO** be aware of changes in your surrounding atmosphere, e.g. hot, cold, smoky. Try to keep your larynx and neck at an even temperature by wrapping up against the cold.

**DO** keep the air in rooms humid. In centrally heated rooms, keep a bowl of water on a table or on the windowsill above the radiator, or throw a wet towel on the radiator, so that the air is not too dry. Open a window to allow air to circulate. [CAUTION: DO NOT BLOCK AIR VENTS ON HEATING EQUIPMENT.]

**DO** watch your dietary habits. Avoid a lot of milk and starchy foods, as these can thicken the mucous in the mouth and throat.

**DO** try to understand what makes your voice good for you and what makes it poor. Be aware of your voice as often as you can.

**DO** regular physical exercise – this will especially help your breathing. IF YOU ARE IN ANY DOUBT ABOUT YOUR FITNESS LEVELS, ALWAYS CONSULT YOUR DOCTOR BEFORE BEGINNING A NEW EXERCISE SCHEDULE.

**DO** inhale steam – this will help relax and lubricate your vocal cords. You can do this either (1) over a bowl of hot water with a towel over your head (BE CAREFUL NOT TO SCALD YOURSELF), (2) by using a 'facial sauna', or (3) by lying for 20 minutes in a hot bath, so that the room fills with steam. Breathe regularly and evenly through your mouth. Do this twice a day for 5 minutes each time – once in the morning and once before going to bed.

**DO** any voice exercises you may have been given when you have plenty of time, not when you are rushed. Concentrate when you are doing them. There are no short cuts to improving your voice – it's one step at a time.



## Things NOT to do

**DON'T** shout or try to raise your voice, and don't force it in any way. No singing whilst the voice is poor.

**DON'T** continue speaking for long periods if you have laryngitis or a sore throat. You will need to rest your voice and give it time to recover.

**DON'T** drink too much coffee, strong tea or soft drinks with high caffeine content – the caffeine has a drying effect.

**DON'T** drink too much alcohol, especially spirits – the alcohol has a similar drying effect to caffeine and causes irritation.

**DON'T** keep coughing or clearing your throat. If throat clearing has become a habit you need to (1) become aware of when you are tempted to clear your throat, then (2) try taking a sip of water, (3) if this doesn't work then try a 'firm swallow', (4) if this still hasn't worked then carry out a 'dry' cough.

**DON'T** smoke. Smoking is generally bad for your health and it can severely impair your voice.

**DON'T** suck 'acid drops' or harsh sweets – if you are thirsty, drink instead.

**DON'T** drink liquids when they are too hot – let them cool a little. If you can manage it, drinking the occasional ice cold drink can be helpful...but not too many.

**DON'T** try to talk above a lot of background noise. Avoid noisy places. If your lifestyle is such that you cannot avoid noisy places then you need to develop strategies for dealing with this. For example, instead of shouting across a room to attract someone's attention, go over to them before you speak; at home, don't shout upstairs for people, go upstairs and talk to them there.

**DON'T** suck lozenges containing menthol or eucalyptus oil if you have a sore throat – these have a drying effect. If you are able, take a spoonful of runny honey instead. If your sore throat is painful and you do need to suck a medicated lozenge or use a spray (such as *Strepsils*, *Ultra Chloroseptic*), remember that they typically have an anesthetic effect to reduce the pain. You will, therefore need to rest your voice for about an hour after use so that you do not unduly irritate your vocal cords. IF THE SYMPTOMS OF A SORE THROAT DO NOT GO AWAY AFTER A TWO WEEK PERIOD YOU SHOULD CONSULT YOUR DOCTOR.

**DON'T** gargle (unless it's to 'wash' the throat after using an inhaler, or to remove chlorine after swimming). If you are prone to throat infections then ensure that you clean your teeth regularly and use a proprietary mouth wash each day.

**DON'T** let tensions build up. Follow a proper relaxation and exercise program. Share your concerns by talking to others.