

Vocal Hygiene Tips for Everyone

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from San Diego Voice and Accent

Vocal Hygiene refers to the way that you care for your voice to keep it healthy. Developing good vocal habits can help protect your voice from injury, maximize your vocal abilities, and maintain your vocal function as you age.

Drink enough water

Vocal cords need to be hydrated from the inside, so make sure you are drinking at least 64 oz. of water a day. Plain water is best, but if you don't like water, you can add a small amount of juice or drink caffeine-free tea.



Keep your mind and body healthy

Stress, sleep, and exercise can all affect the voice. Try to squeeze in a few de-stressing activities each day, like walking or meditating, and make sure you are getting enough sleep so you wake up feeling rested in the morning.



Limit high risk vocal behaviors

These include yelling, shouting, talking loudly over background noise, talking for long periods of time without taking a break, and singing without a proper warm-up.



Be aware of how much you are using your voice. Avoid using your voice too much, too loudly, and for too long.

Avoid irritants

Smoking can harm the vocal cords and lungs and should be avoided.

Pay attention to your environment and limit your exposure to any irritants, including secondhand smoke, chemical fumes, car exhaust, and pollen, and dust.



Avoid drying agents

Many medications for colds and allergies have dryness as a side effect. Make sure you are drinking extra water to maintain your hydration.

Avoid using cough drops that contain mint, menthol, or eucalyptus, as these can promote dryness in the body.



Limit excessive throat clearing and coughing

Repeated throat clearing and coughing can irritate the vocal cords. It can be a vicious cycle: The more you clear your throat, the more you feel like you need to do it!

Instead, try taking a sip of water and swallowing hard or complete a "silent" throat clear: Make a fast "hhh" sound with just airflow and then swallow.



Manage acid reflux

Acid reflux (also called GERD/LPR or heartburn) can impact your vocal function due to the potential for increased coughing or throat clearing (especially after meals) and/or the risk of acid spilling into your throat while you sleep.

If you have symptoms of heartburn or have GERD/LPR, discuss how you can manage these symptoms with your doctor. You may need to make adjustments to your diet and lifestyle, or your doctor may recommend medication.

