

Voice Disorders

DID YOU KNOW...

- Research in voice disorders identifies teachers and secretaries as “at risk” for vocal disorders?
- More teachers seek voice therapy than any other profession?
- Vocal abuse and misuse can lead to excessive sick leave and PERMANENT vocal damage?



Symptoms of a Voice Disorder:

- Hoarseness
- Reduced pitch range
- Breathiness
- Vocal fatigue
- Voice breaks
- Strained voice
- Change in pitch
- Loss of volume control
- Vocal tremor (shakiness)
- Chronic throat clearing or coughing
- Recurring loss of voice
- Pain or other sensations

Research in voice disorders identifies teachers and secretaries as 2 of the top 10 occupations in which voice disorders are most likely to occur.

Take a moment to think about how often you use your voice each day. What would happen if you developed a voice disorder?

WHAT IS A VOICE DISORDER? A voice disorder is said to exist when the quality, pitch, and loudness differ from the voices of others of similar age, gender, cultural background, and geographic location. The structure and/or function of the larynx (voice box) no longer meets the voicing requirements established for it by its owner.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF A VOICE DISORDER? These include hoarseness, vocal fatigue (tired after long periods of talking), breathy voice, reduced range (can't produce notes you once could— common in singers), aphonia (absence of voice), pitch breaks (squeakiness, cracks, never knowing what sound will come out), strain/struggling, tremor (shaky

voice quality), and/or pain.

WHAT ARE SOME COMMON VOICE DISORDERS?

These include laryngitis, vocal nodules, vocal polyps, contact ulcers, and laryngeal carcinoma (cancer). All are caused by a variety of things, including misuse and abuse of the voice from smoking, screaming, consuming alcohol, and talking for extended periods of time. Treatments include vocal rest, hydration, voice therapy, surgery, radiation, or a laryngectomy (removal of the larynx).

WHAT IS VOCAL HYGIENE?

Just as we take time to care for our bodies, we should take time to care for our voice. Good vocal hygiene generally includes:

- Hydrating the vocal folds by increasing intake of water
- Eliminate throat clearing/coughing (when you cough, your vocal folds slam together at 70 miles per hour!). Substitute with a “sniff-swallow” .
- Reduce nonessential talking.
- Reduce singing/talking in

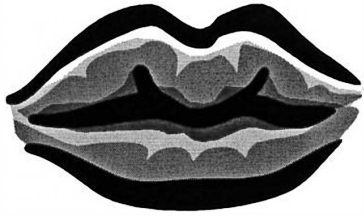
loud background noise.

- Reduce or eliminate alcohol intake and smoking.
- Restrict medications that dry out the mouth, throat, and larynx.
- Restrict aspirin use during loud talking periods.
- Get more rest!
- Restrict use of loud voice in windy, cold, outdoor areas.
- Eliminate or reduce caffeine intake.

HOW DO I REDUCE VOCAL ABUSE? Some suggestions include:

- Use microphones when speaking to large groups.
- Speak quietly, but do not whisper (it actually is more straining on the voice).
- Build periods of vocal rest into your day (not singing in the car/shower, not speaking when students are at specials).
- Becoming aware of any vocally abusive behaviors and charting them daily.

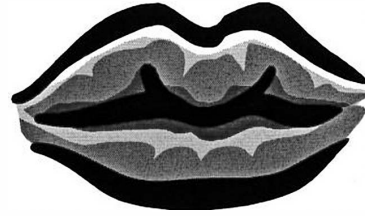
Adapted from Elizabeth Clark, M.S., CCC-SLP



PROTECT YOUR MOST VALUABLE TOOL, YOUR VOICE.

SOME HINTS:

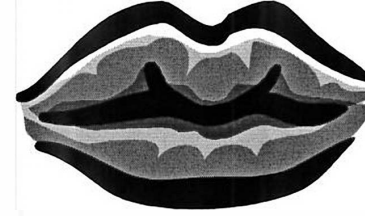
1. Don't strain—no shouting!
2. Drink plenty of water.
3. Take vocal rests—let the students do the talking.
4. Speak at your optimal pitch.
5. If sore throats persist, see a doctor.
6. Learn more about voice disorders.



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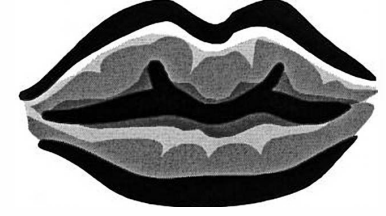
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