

SINGING SIMPLIFIED

10 GREAT TIPS TO KEEP YOUR VOICE HEALTHY!



#1 Warm Up Your Voice

At some point in the morning, before you start using your voice for the day, take a few minutes to warm up a bit. There are muscles in the **larynx** (your voice box) that stretch and shorten the vocal cords, so it's important those muscles get warmed up before they're worked out - just like any other muscle in your body. Even if you're not singing that day you'll be *speaking* all day, right? Your voice is your voice no matter how you use it! Lip Rolls and light, buzzy humming are great ways to warm it up. Trust me, if you keep your voice healthy on non-singing days, it'll be much happier on the days you do sing!



#2 Exercise, Eat Well, and Stay Hydrated

What does your general health have to do with your voice? Have you ever heard what someone sounds like when they're sick, very unhealthy, or have bad allergies? Of course you have - we recognize that stuff right away! Well, it works the opposite way too. Take care of your body's health and you'll be taking care of your vocal health.

It's important to stay hydrated as well. Every single muscle of the body needs to be hydrated to flex and move happily, and that includes the muscles of the larynx. Your vocal cords dehydrate quickly too, and it takes a long time to rehydrate them, so regularly drink water throughout the day, every day.

When singing, I highly recommend drinking *room temperature* water. Avoid ice-water. Would you jump into an ice bath in the middle of your workout at the gym? Probably not. Cold tightens muscles, and we want the muscles of the throat and larynx to be loose!



#3 Avoid Loud Talking... and YELLING!!

As I mentioned in Tip #1, your voice is your voice - singing or speaking - so it's important to take care of it at all times. Two of the worst things you can do to your voice are yelling, and talking loudly for a long period of time. Did you scream your head off at the Soccer game and lose your voice the other day? Obviously that's no good.

The silent killer is loud talking, because we don't feel it immediately hurting our voices like yelling does. When we're in a loud place like a bar, restaurant, or at a party, we don't often realize how loud we're talking (borderline yelling) to be heard over the crowd. This can easily stress out your vocal cords, causing them to swell, and it can take an entire day of vocal rest for them to feel healthy again.

Let's say you have a big show on Friday and you're invited to a party on Thursday night. Well, it's your call, but I'd skip that one. If you have to go though, let your friends do most of the talking. And when you do talk, be careful not to get too loud for too long. Your singing voice will thank you the next night at the gig, I promise!!



#4 Steam Is Your Friend

Feeling sick? Sore throat? Stuffed up? Phlegmy? Congested? Are you a little horse? (Some might call you a pony. #Dad-Joke!)

Steam is your new BFF! Warm liquids like **Throat Coat Tea** work great to make your throat feel better, but they don't physically touch the vocal cords (or the lungs) because they're *liquid* and go down the other pipe. But steam, being a *gas*, comes in direct contact with the vocal cords and helps minimize swelling. (Vocal cord swelling is the typical cause of the hoarseness we experience. When the vocal cords are swollen, they simply don't vibrate as well.) Also, if you feel chest congestion, the steam reaches the lungs of course, and can help loosen the phlegm in the lungs. Honestly though, if your cold is in your lungs, singing is almost impossible. If the cold is in your head, you can sing around it. Vicks (pictured above) makes a cool Personal Steam Inhaler for example. Just don't stick your face all the way in. I've learned from experience that steam is hot. ;)



#5 Humidity Is Also Your Friend

That futuristic, tear-drop looking thing pictured above is a Cool-Mist Humidifier. I highly recommend these for singers - especially during the Winter, and in dry climates. The heater in your home really dries out the air, and dry air causes your vocal cords to dehydrate even more - especially during sleep. We all know what our voices sound and feel like in the morning, right? A lot of that is dehydration. If the air in your room is at a proper level of humidity, your voice will feel better when you wake up! It'll feel more lubricated - like your engine has oil in it. You may have noticed a theme in these tips so far: Hydration, steam, moisture... GOOD FOR YOUR VOICE. Dryness and dehydration... BAD FOR YOUR VOICE. (Basically, your voice would be happier in the Bahamas than in the Sahara desert.)

Heads up on humidifiers! They are kinda high-maintenance, because they require weekly cleaning... and you have to do it. You don't want to humidify your air with mold!



#6 Shut-up-a-your-face!

Your vocal cords love, and need, rest. If you talk all day long at work, and sing in the car, and sing in the shower, etc... they never get a break. Do you go to the gym *all day every day*? Of course not! You'd be exhausted. The muscles in the larynx, and the vocal cords themselves, need regular breaks. So, whenever possible, stop yappin' it up and give them a nice rest.

If you sing regularly, make sure you give yourself one full day each week with no singing at all, and as little talking as possible. I know that isn't very easy to pull off, but do your best, especially if you have a show coming up!

The Golden Rule: Pay attention to your voice, and it will tell you when it needs rest. That's some of the best advice I can give you.



#7 Get some sleep!

The other recurring theme you've seen in these tips is that *what's good for your body is good for your voice*, so this one is pretty obvious. If you're really tired, singing is tough! Singing takes: 1. Focus 2. Physical Energy 3. Emotional Energy

Now ask yourself, "Can I tap into any of those three things when I'm exhausted?" I'll save you the effort if you're tired... The answer is a huge, whopping, resonating, "NO WAY DUDE!" Experts say that 7 hours or so of sleep every single night of your life, is a good idea.

So, get your sleep! Your voice, your body, your mind, your friends, your significant other, your co-workers, and your family will thank you as well. You'll be a better you, top to bottom!



#8 Minimize Stress

We carry so much of our stress in our voices! When we're stressed out, our breathing tends to get tighter & more shallow, and we get tighter in the throat as well. Just like with correct singing technique, you have to use your breath well and keep your throat open to make your voice happy.

- Stress causes the muscles of the body to tighten and therefore fatigue more quickly - including the muscles in the larynx.
- It's been proven that stress and anxiety can make you sick (which obviously affects your voice).
- When we're stressed out we tend to not eat as well, sleep as well, and take care of ourselves as well in general, which (as you've already learned) affect the health of your voice.



#9 Take Care of Those Allergies!

This one is big! Most people suffer from some sort of allergies, whether it's cat, dog, dust, pollen, etc... It's extremely important to take care of them *on a consistent basis* to keep your voice happy and healthy. If you've decided you want to be a singer, part of the deal includes making sure your voice stays in good health at all times. And allergies are the same as colds, as far as your voice is concerned.

- First things first: AVOID THE ALLERGEN as much as possible.
- If you have pollen allergies: Wash pillow cases often, wash your hair before bed, don't let your dog sleep with you ("Spot" is full of pollen), and don't sleep with the windows open.
- Find out what allergy medications work best for you, without drying out your voice too much. Talk to your doctor and do some research. There are lots of options!
- The Personal Steam Inhaler and Humidifier help too!



#10 Cigarettes and Alcohol

I'm not saying that you need to live on top of a rolling green hill, drink only mountain spring water, eat only organic and natural foods, and live the perfectly healthy life, to be a great singer. It's all about experimenting and figuring out what **you** can (and can't) do to keep **your voice** in healthy condition. We're all quite different!

- Cigarettes: If you want to take singing seriously, I *highly* recommend never touching these things and/or quit ASAP. They are horrible for you and your voice. Duh.
- Alcohol: It's all about moderation. Alcohol dehydrates your vocal cords, and tends to make us hang out at the bar later, talk louder for longer, etc... and we talked (not too loudly) about that already.
- Drink water when you're drinking alcohol to stay hydrated. And I don't recommend drinking alcohol *while* singing either. Vocal technique tends to go right out the window when we're buzzed! FWLLLLLAAAAAARGHHH!