

# Top tips on caring for and projecting your voice

**Our voices are a key part of our identity. We use them to communicate with our families, friends, work colleagues and wider society. They convey our thoughts and feelings, and enable us to make an impact, whether we are speaking, shouting, cheering or singing. It is important that we take care of our voices to avoid long-term problems.**

## General advice

- Maintain hydration and keep alcoholic drinks to a minimum. Drinking 8-10 glasses of water a day is recommended, as dehydration can lead to vocal fold injury and changes in vocal quality.
- Rest your voice when possible. Steam your voice when required and use a humidifier or water spray to moisten the air in centrally heated offices or home
- Monitor changes in your voice quality carefully and do not disregard changes if they last for two weeks or more.
- 'Warm up' your voice before speaking in public by relaxing your shoulders and neck and gently humming.
- Get enough sleep and exercise. Your voice reflects your general health and wellbeing

## What to avoid

- Talking above loud background noise at large events or overusing your voice for long periods.
- Smoking, vaping, recreational drugs, chemical irritants, or particulates such as dust, dirt or smoke all compromise the delicate vocal folds and can cause changes that affect their structure and function, leading to alterations in vocal quality.
- Foods that cause indigestion or eating a large meal just before going to bed at night; both may cause reflux which can lead to vocal cord irritation and damage.

- Spicy foods and dairy produce can cause thick secretions and throat clearing.
- Vigorous throat clearing can lead to vocal fold irritation. Sip water or cough gently instead.
- Drinks that cause dehydration such as tea, coffee and carbonated soda drinks.

## Projecting your voice

- Aim for an open and relaxed stance with weight evenly distributed and balanced posture. Poor posture affects vocal delivery, so avoid locked knees, weight on one leg, raised shoulders and forward thrust of the head and neck.
- Wear comfortable shoes and clothes.
- Try to develop a relaxed form of delivery with controlled breathing.
- Articulate clearly and use a good range of intonation to improve your projection. Emphasis, energy and variety projects the voice better than a loud and strained voice.
- Don't try to speak too loudly as it can lead to a constricted and often harsh vocal pitch.

## Pay attention to the environment

- Be aware of the acoustics of the space to determine the amount of reverberation (vibrations and/or echo from your voice).
- When speaking outdoors, if possible stand on a platform or near a wall.
- When possible, use amplification to avoid voice strain.

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