How to care for your voice and support recovery from voice problems

This advice outlines how to care for your voice while you recover from a voice problem. This could include:

- **changes in voice quality** such as hoarseness, roughness, breathiness or changes in pitch
- **difficulty using the voice**, including strain, tiredness, reduced volume or loss of voice
- **throat symptoms affecting the voice**, such as discomfort, tightness, coughing or frequent throat clearing
- **voice changes linked to illness**, irritation, overuse or recovery after treatment

It will help support your recovery and maintain a healthy voice use in the long term.

Looking after your voice day to day

Try to relax physically and mentally

Take advantage of rest periods during the day.

Do not shout or whisper

This strains the larynx which can make the vocal cords work harder than they need to. It may increase irritation, tiredness or discomfort in the throat, worsen hoarseness, and make it harder for the voice to recover.

Whispering can also put extra tension on the voice box. Use a gentle, easy voice where possible.

Avoid raising the volume of voice

Position yourself near to the person you're talking to and avoid talking from room to room.

You should also avoid talking:

- from downstairs to upstairs
- over background noise, such as TV, radio, work machinery, traffic or domestic appliances.

Speak in an easy, relaxed, quiet way without forcing your voice

A quiet voice can often hold attention. You can emphasise points by pausing both before and after key words and phrases. This can be as effective as raising volume.

Varying the speed and pitch of your voice helps to keep the listener's attention.

Be aware of your posture

Avoid slouching or being too rigid to optimise your breathing efficiency and ease tension when speaking.

Using your voice carefully

Plan your daily routine

Avoid using your voice excessively for long periods. Try to rest your voice after any lengthy period of use.

Keeping your throat comfortable

Keep your throat moist

If your throat is dry, keep a glass of water handy and take sips regularly. Drink water rather than sucking throat sweets.

Avoid dry, hot and dusty atmospheres

For example, in centrally heated rooms, keep a bowl of water out to increase humidity in the room.

Try not to cough or clear your throat

Dry swallow or sip water instead if necessary.

Avoid smoking

Smoking is a vocal cord irritant. Get help to quit smoking or search online for 'Be Healthy Bucks'

Medicines, inhalers and throat products

If you use inhalers

Rinse your mouth and throat after every use.

Avoid over-reliance on lozenges or sprays containing local anaesthetics

This may reduce pain in the throat and mask the presence of problems, which can encourage voice misuse.

When your voice is affected by illness or singing

If you catch a cold and develop laryngitis

Keep speaking to a minimum until the infection improves. Take time off work if necessary.

Laryngitis is inflammation of the voice box and your voice quality will change because of it.

The vocal cords are vulnerable to misuse when inflamed.

People with voice problems often have trouble singing

Do not attempt to sing if it feels uncomfortable or exacerbates symptoms. Return to singing when your voice can cope with it.

Practising steam inhalation regularly can also help during your recovery.

About this patient information

Please remember that this leaflet is intended as general information only. We aim to make the information as up to date and accurate as possible, but please note that it is subject to change. Please therefore always check specific advice on any concerns you may have with your doctor.

How can I help reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection prevention and control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection prevention and control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. Please follow our infection prevention and control guidelines when visiting our healthcare sites. Further information is available on our website.

Patient advice sheet

If you would like a copy of this information on audiotape, in large print or translated, please call the Patient Advice Liaison Service on
01296 831120 or email bht.pals@nhs.net