

PATIENT INFORMATION SHEET

LOOKING AFTER YOUR VOICE

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What are the key things for me to do to look after my voice?

- Improve hydration to the voice box
- Reduce the urge to clear the throat and avoid excessive voice use
- Stop cigarette smoking
- Treat your reflux
- Relax!

How do I improve the hydration of the voice box?

- Drink plenty of water at regular intervals during the day (8 glasses as a guide)
- Don't smoke
- Avoid excessive caffeine and alcohol (these both dehydrate the body)
- Avoid prolonged exposure to pollutants, dust, smoke, air-conditioning and chemicals
- Consider using steam inhalations (inhale steam from a bowl of hot water). These create a moist layer on the surface of the voice box

Why is throat clearing important?

- Everyone has the need to clear the throat from time-to-time, but for some people it becomes a habit. It can be difficult to stop and it stresses the vocal cords
- It is a problem because it causes the vocal cords to slam shut against each other, resulting in trauma, inflammation and swelling. This affects voice quality

What can I do instead of clearing the throat?

- Swallow rather than cough. It relaxes the throat and reduces the urge to clear the throat
- Drink water. It reduces the urge to cough or throat clear and assists voice box hydration
- Relax the throat by yawning widely

What are some strategies to help me avoid excessive voice use?

- Avoid yelling, loud cheering and speaking over loud noise
- Use amplification if you need to talk in large or noisy places
- If your work has a high voice demand:
 - Plan to rest your voice before and after times of heavy use
 - Limit time spent on the telephone
 - See a speech therapist to get some 'warm-up' exercises and develop efficient voice use strategies

Why is stress management important?

- Everyday stress can cause tension in the muscles of the throat and neck
- This in turn affects normal voice production and voice quality
- It also promotes abnormal patterns of voice use that can strain the voice

Where do I get more information?

- Speak with me at our consultation
- I also conduct a voice clinic at the Royal Adelaide Hospital in conjunction with a speech therapist. It may be appropriate for you to reviewed there also



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