

# Looking after your voice...

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Below is some basic advice that can help keep your voice in good health. Not all of them will relate to you so read carefully and decide some goals for your voice.

### **Drink more water**

Aim to drink 2 litres of water each day. If you don't like plain water, you could have water with some squash or diluted fruit juice. If you like hot drinks, try a mug of hot water or herbal tea. Avoid fizzy water as this can encourage burping.

### **Stop smoking**

We all know that smoking is bad for our health. Smoking is bad for your voice too. Talk to your GP about how to give up – or phone the NHS smoking helpline on 0800 169 0169.

### **Daily steam inhalations**

Take a bowl or basin of hot water. Lean over the basin with a towel over your head and breathe the steam in through your nose and out through your mouth, to prevent coughing. Do this as many times as you need to during the day, but avoid doing this before any strenuous voice use or voice exercises. Do it every day for one week and see if it helps to improve your throat/voice. If it helps, make steaming part of your daily routine.

### **Stop clearing your throat**

If you find yourself frequently clearing your throat out of habit, try very hard to stop doing this. Each time you feel the urge to clear your throat, stop and have a sip of water. Swallow a couple of times and see if the feeling goes away without you needing to clear your throat. Allergies/asthma/asthma inhalers can be potential contributing factors.

### **Be aware of reflux**

Acid reflux is a very common occurrence. Sometimes all we notice is an irritation in our throat or a change in our voice. It can help to follow these basic rules:

- do not go to bed on a full stomach; wait at least 3 hours before lying down
- avoid spicy food or oily/greasy foods
- avoid fizzy drinks + alcohol + caffeinated tea/coffee
- sleep with the head of your bed propped up with books/blocks so that your feet are lower than your head.

### **Cut down on caffeine and alcohol**

Caffeine and alcohol can both dehydrate your throat and cause reflux. Drinking lots of caffeine and/or alcohol can make your voice dry and rough. Be aware that green tea also contains caffeine. Avoid tea and coffee and try decaffeinated instead (although be aware these may not be completely free of caffeine), or herbal tea.

## Get plenty of sleep

Like the rest of your body, your voice becomes tired if you use it a lot or if you are not getting enough sleep. If you have trouble sleeping seek advice from your GP.

## Be aware of stress and tension.

Stress and tension, either emotional or physical, can have a significant impact on the voice. It is useful to be aware of how you cope with stress. Consider speaking to your GP if you feel you would like some help.

## Consider air quality

Dry, smoky, dusty or polluted environments can have a negative impact on your voice, as can chemicals such as cleaning products. If these affect you, consider ways to reduce your exposure, e.g. wear a mask, open a window, have a bowl of water under your radiator to humidify the air.

## Be aware of posture and breathing

This may be addressed in therapy. If you feel these areas may be an issue speak to your Speech Therapist.

## Take it easy on your voice

Make sure that you are not straining your voice unnecessarily. For example, turn the TV/stereo down if you are trying to talk, go and talk to someone rather than shout at them across the room. Think of ways that you can get attention without yelling e.g. clapping your hands, using a whistle or a microphone. If you feel strain on speaking, consider taking breaks and giving your voice a rest. Be aware whispering can also strain your voice.

*If you are interested in finding out more information the following external websites may be useful:*  
[www.britishvoiceassociation.org.uk](http://www.britishvoiceassociation.org.uk) & [www.voicecare.org.uk](http://www.voicecare.org.uk)

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### Private Clinics:

#### Spire London East (Roding) Hospital

- Tuesday 6:00 – 8:00pm
- Wednesday 09:30 – 12:00pm
- Saturday 9:30 – 12:30pm

#### The Holly Private Hospital

- Tuesday 1:30 – 5:00pm
- Wednesday 6:00– 7:30pm (alternate weeks)

#### 150 Harley Street

- Monday 9:30 –12.30pm

#### Nuffield Health Brentwood

- Friday 10:30 -12.30 (1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>)

#### The London Clinic

- Wednesday 2:00– 5:00pm (alternate weeks)

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