

# Vocal Hygiene Strategies

(Wicklund, 2010)

1. Avoid using an excessively loud voice. Especially avoid shouting, screaming, cheering, or talking/singing loudly for prolonged periods of time. Also, avoid habitual whispering.
2. Avoid talking or singing in the presence of high noise levels (e.g., loud music, noisy crowds) that tend to lead to an automatic increase in vocal loudness.
3. Avoid vigorous coughing, throat clearing, sneezing; if unavoidable, then do them as gently and quietly as possible. Try to develop a “silent” cough, which will reduce violent slamming together of the vocal folds. Or use “huff and swallow”- blowing air over abducted/open folds to remove mucus, then swallowing it. Ideally, take a sip of liquid or substitute a swallowing movement for coughing or throat clearing.
4. Avoid smoking and smoky environments. Smoke may dry and irritate the membranes of the nose, mouth, and throat (Anticaglia et al., 2004).
5. Stay away from dust, paint fumes, auto exhaust, insecticides, and other air pollutants.
6. Avoid the use of alcoholic beverages and caffeine.
7. Drink plenty of water each day (approximately one-half of body weight in ounces of water/other nondehydrating liquids).
8. Do not use your voice, or use it as little and as quietly as possible, when you are suffering from a cold or other upper respiratory problem.
9. Avoid long exposures to dry/cold air. Breathe through a scarf when outside to warm the air you inhale.
10. Use a humidifier or vaporizer, especially during the heating season.
11. If you tend to be a mouth breather, your larynx and throat may be more susceptible to drying. You may need additional hydrating measures to compensate for this. Try nasal strips to open up obstructed nasal passages.
12. Investigate any side effects of medications you regularly use, even “over the counter” drugs that may produce edema, dryness, and other side effects affecting the vocal folds.
13. Notice the influence of food or environmental allergies on vocal function and take appropriate preventative measures.
14. Avoid unusually high or low pitch levels during speaking or singing.
15. Avoid talking with a clenched jaw. Develop an awareness of situations when you have jaw tension in daily life (e.g., during car trips, at a computer, or while talking on the telephone). Consciously monitor tension incidences and instead use adequate breath support and released jaw while speaking.
16. Note and avoid tendencies to use upper chest or shoulder elevations while breathing for speech and singing.
17. Replenish your air supply early and often while breathing for speech.
18. Maintain favorable posture, as poor posture can make voice production difficult.
19. Maintain your health. Get adequate rest, nutrition, and exercise. Employ stress-reduction strategies, and learn to relax. Remember that your larynx is an emotional thermostat!
20. Always remember that voice production should appear to be effortless.

Wicklund, K. (2010). *Singing voice rehabilitation: A guide for the voice teacher and speech-language pathologist*. New York: Delmar Cengage Learning.