

# Vocal Health for Professional Voice Users

[www.freedomofvoice.co.uk](http://www.freedomofvoice.co.uk)



## HYDRATE

- Drink at least 6-8 glasses of water a day. It takes around 4 hours for the hydration to reach the vocal folds, so if you are starting early in the morning, make sure you drink plenty of water the night before
- If you are teaching hourly classes/lessons, aim to drink at least a pint of water during each session.

## AVOID

- Ingesting anything that causes dehydration: alcohol, caffeine, excessive salt
- Smoking anything, at all costs, or allowing anyone to smoke near you. Inhalation of hot smoke/air (such as vaping) is the number one way to dry the vocal folds, causing irritation and eventually damage.
- Trying to talk in a loud/noisy environment, shouting, loud singing etc.
- Whispering: it dries the vocal folds by increasing the amount of air passing over them (while they are also in a less than efficient position). If you need to communicate quietly, speak in a low voice or write
- Heavy meals just before bed, and also any irritants such as chilli, the night before a heavy vocal day.

## TOP TIPS

- Try and maintain a humid atmosphere if possible - air conditioning and fans will dry the air you're breathing, and thus the vocal folds.
- STEAM: aim to inhale steam for at least 5 minutes, twice a day. The easiest way to do this is to put very hot water into a thermos and simply breathe in (mouth/nose makes little difference). There are several voice-specific devices for this but aren't necessary.
- REST: try to rest the voice as much as possible after periods of heavy use.
- When working with technology, use a good microphone and train yourself to speak quieter (this is very hard at first as the brain has to accept that the sound the 'other end' is perfectly adequate, even though it may sound quiet to you). Encourage your listeners to turn up their volume so you don't need to project as much.
- Try straw work to reset the breath-voice mechanism.  
<https://www.thenakedvocalist.com/podcast/42/>

- SLEEP: sleep and rest are the best protective mechanisms so make sure you get enough good quality sleep.
- EXERCISE: walking and light running are excellent for maintaining the voice
- Massage: if your neck, shoulders and throat are tense and uncomfortable, consider a sports massage or even some gentle mobilisation exercises. Tension in this area can have a significant impact on the vocal musculature.

If you notice a change in your voice that persists for more than two weeks despite good vocal hygiene, see a doctor and get referred to a voice specialist ENT.

Visit [www.britishvoiceassociation.org.uk](http://www.britishvoiceassociation.org.uk) for more information.