



What is a Voice Disorder?

Voice disorders are medical conditions involving abnormal pitch, loudness or quality of the sound produced by the larynx and thereby affecting speech production.

How do you know when your voice is not healthy?

If you answer "yes" to any of the following questions, you may have a voice problem:

1. Do you find yourself repeatedly clearing your throat?
2. Has it become an effort to talk?
3. Do you experience pain in the throat after giving a talk?
4. Does your throat often feel raw, achy, or strained?
5. Have you lost your ability to hit some high notes when singing?

6. Do you have pitch breaks?
7. Has your voice become hoarse or raspy?

What causes voice problems?

- Vocal misuse and overuse.
- Growths on the vocal folds.
- Inflammation caused by gastroesophageal reflux (sometimes called acid reflux, heartburn, or GERD).
- Upper respiratory infections.
- Cancer of the larynx.
- Neurological diseases (such as vocal fold paralysis)
- Psychological trauma.



Signs and Symptoms

- Roughness.
- Perception of audible air escape in the sound (Breathiness).
- Perception of increased effort; tense or harsh as if talking and lifting at the same time (Strained quality).
- As if talking with breath held (Strangled quality)
- Abnormal pitch (too high, too low, pitch breaks, decreased pitch range);
- Abnormal loudness/volume (too high, too low, decreased range, unsteady volume);
- Abnormal resonance (hypernasal, hyponasal,);
- Loss of voice (Aphonia)
- Weak voice
- Hoarse voice (raspy, audible aperiodicity in sound);
- Shrill voice (high, piercing sound, as if stifling a scream); and
- Tremulous voice

Here are some tips to prevent voice problems

Stay Hydrated.....

- ❖ Drink plenty of water. Frequent intake of small sip of water will avoid vocal fold dryness.
- ❖ Limit your intake of drinks that contain alcohol or caffeine, which can cause the body to lose water and make the vocal folds and larynx dry. Alcohol also irritates the mucous membranes that line the throat
- ❖ Avoid or limit use of medications that dry out the vocal folds, including some common cold and allergy medications. If you have voice problems, ask your doctor which medications would be safest for you to use.

Maintain a healthy lifestyle and diet.....

- ❖ Don't smoke and avoid passive smoking. Smoke irritates the vocal folds. Also, cancer of the vocal folds is seen most often in individuals who smoke.
- ❖ Avoid eating spicy foods. Spicy foods can cause stomach acid to move into esophagus, causing heartburn or acidic reflux.
- ❖ Avoid mouthwash or gargles that contain alcohol or irritating chemicals.

Use your voice wisely.....

- ❖ Try not to overuse your voice. Avoid speaking or singing when your voice is hoarse or tired.
- ❖ Avoid using the extremes of your vocal range, such as screaming or whispering. Talking too loudly and too softly can both stress your voice.
- ❖ Practice good breathing techniques when singing or talking. Support your voice with deep breaths from the chest, and don't rely on your throat alone.

If you think you have a voice problem, consult a speech-language pathologist immediately. A speech-language pathologist can help you improve the way you use your voice.

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Public Education Pamphlet

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