



VOCAL HYGIENE: HELP YOUR CHILD MAINTAIN A HEALTHY VOICE

Your speech pathologist will give you exercises specifically designed for your child. Here are some things he/she may suggest:

Help your child stay well hydrated:

Water is most effective when it is consumed in smaller amounts throughout the day. Avoid situations and substances that may dehydrate your child's vocal cords such as caffeinated beverages, second-hand smoke, or medicated throat lozenges. Use humidifiers in dry, winter months.

Encourage relaxation exercises if tension is diagnosed:

Have your child stretch their neck, shoulders, tongue, facial and jaw muscles periodically throughout the day. Chewing sugarless gum (gently) may help relax muscles and yawning exercises which tightens, and then relaxes the chest, throat, and mouth may be some of the exercises your speech therapist may recommend.

Reinforce adequate breath support for voice use:

Encourage your child to pause appropriately when speaking to take a breath, especially during longer sentences. Slow, relaxed breaths during pauses and speaking at a normal rate are recommended.

Monitor the effects of medication on your voice:

Many medications can cause dryness throughout your child's body, including their mouth and throat. Your child should drink plenty of water to compensate for their drying effects.

Recognize symptoms of reflux:

Both gastroesophageal reflux (GERD) and laryngo-pharyngeal reflux (LPR) can negatively affect your child's voice. Some of the common symptoms include: *Hoarseness, Chronic (ongoing) coughing, frequent throat clearing, pain or sensation in throat, feeling of a lump in the throat, bad/ bitter taste in the mouth (especially in the morning), asthma like symptoms etc.*

Help your child maintain an ideal body weight:

This will reduce the likelihood of reflux and ease breathing during the night by reducing snoring and mouth breathing.

Model good vocal hygiene and healthy voice use:

Help your child to maintain good general health (encourage adequate rest, regular exercise, balanced diet), avoid overuse of the voice when tired or during a cold, throat clearing or coughing, whispering, loud excessive talking and shouting, straining your voice, making vocally abusive noises during play,



FACTORS THAT CAN AFFECT THE VOICE:

Factors

- hearing loss
- craniofacial anomalies
- hyper-extended jaw
- medications
- allergies
- deviated septum
- surgery
- abnormal palate
- frequent colds
- post nasal drip
- reflux
- other:

Abusive Practices

- throat clearing
- crying
- excessive talking
- strained laughing
- screaming
- impersonations
- coughing
- smoking
- competing with background noise
- yodeling
- grunting
- bulimia
- singing (in car/ with CDs)
- cheering
- other:

Lifestyle/ Environment Issues

- voice models
- noisy environment
- cheerleading
- sports
- choir/ singing
- poor sleep patterns
- poor eating habits
- dramatics
- aggressive arguing
- stress
- family communication style
- air pollution
- other:

Interpersonal behaviors

- talking too much
- ignoring feedback
- not seeking feedback
- poor self esteem
- depression
- aggressive behavior
- competing for attention
- other: