

Care of Your Voice

What is *not* good for your vocal cords and voice?

Trauma

1. Poor vocal habit (i.e. vocal abuse). For singing, the music you select should not be outside your vocal range. Avoid performing in areas with poor acoustics and ones that make excessive demands on your voice.
2. Severe or chronic coughing. If unable to avoid cough or throat clearing, always follow with sips of water.
3. If a cough continues, you should be evaluated by a medical provider.

Infections

1. Viral upper respiratory infections (colds) may cause inflammation of the vocal cords. Anti-inflammatory medications may minimize the injury and speed recovery.
2. Bacterial conditions require antibiotics.

Pollution

1. Denver has excessive amounts of automobile exhaust and other chemicals in the air. Because air conditioning removes some of this pollution, try to stay indoors in a building with air conditioning when the air quality is poor outside.
2. If you smoke, quit. Ask about “Stop Smoking” information.
3. Cigarette smoke from others (i.e. secondhand smoke), for example, in nightclubs. If you attend these environments, try not to stay any longer than necessary.

Dryness

1. Denver is very dry, especially in the summer and winter. Central humidification is helpful if the central heating unit is on, but not when it is off. A bedside humidifier is usually helpful (remember to keep it clean and to check amount of moisture in the air, avoid mold growth).
2. Drink up to eight extra glasses of water every day.
3. Alcohol, even in social quantities, will dry your mucous membranes because of the direct effect as it is swallowed and the remote effect as a diuretic. Caffeine is also a mild diuretic.
4. Your nose is your first line of defense and it normally conditions the air before it gets to your vocal cords. Cold air is warmed, dry air is humidified, and polluted air is partly purified by your nose. Some individuals have a nose problems such as a deviated septum (bone in the nose has shifted to right or left) or rhinitis (runny nose) that interferes with these normal protective functions. It may be useful to have these problems treated in order to improve vocal cord function.

Adapted from ENT, Rose Hospital, Denver, CO.