VOCAL HEALTH FOR SINGERS

As a singer, your voice is your instrument, and it is important to learn to care for not just your vocal folds, but your whole body as well!
Read the following tips about keeping your body & voice healthy, so that you can make the most of your instrument.

Voice Use:

- Learn about how to use your voice efficiently for both speaking and singing. Voice use should feel free and effortless, without any excessive work or effort occurring in the throat.
- Avoid voice-use habits that may irritate or fatigue your voice, including excessive coughing or throat clearing, straining your voice to be heard over loud noise, harsh whispering, and vocal over-use.
- Imagine you have a budget of $50 worth of voice use each day, and consider the vocal cost of each vocalisation. Effortless and well connected speaking or singing costs a small amount, while strained or excessively loud speaking or singing costs you more. If you know you have a gig in a loud venue in the evening, and will need to speak over loud noise (if you can't possibly avoid it!), then ensure you have slightly lower voice use during the day. Spend your vocal money wisely!

Hydration:

- Always drink plenty of water!
- Your voice relies on a healthy level of hydration to function optimally, and to avoid injury.
- Keep in mind that hydration does not happen instantly. Drinking water during your singing lesson or during performance will not have an impact on your voice at the time, so instead you should aim to maintain sufficient hydration at all times.
- Be wary of things that might cause dehydration, in particular avoid alcohol whenever possible, but especially in the days prior to a performance.

Nutrition:

- A healthy voice requires a healthy body. Ensure you eat a balanced diet that provides the energy and nutrients required to keep your body healthy.
- Avoid eating within 2 hours of going to bed, as this may exacerbate reflux.

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Irritants:

- Inhaling tobacco, or any other smoke, is incredibly irritating to the voice, and can also lead to serious long term health issues that will affect your voice. Avoid smoking or being around smokers wherever possible.
- Particularly dry or dusty air, or chemical exposure can also be irritating for the voice.

Mental Health:

- Taking care of your mental health and wellbeing is an essential part of caring for your body and voice, and emotional stress is often reflected in your vocal health.
- If you are experiencing stress or any other mental health concerns, consult the campus counsellor or your medical practitioner.
- There are ways to cope with performance anxiety and stage fright, don't be afraid to ask for help!

Disease/Disorder Management:

- Reflux: If you experience symptoms of reflux, it's possible that this may have an effect on your voice. Consider dietary changes or speak to your GP if you are concerned.
- Common Cold/Influenza: If you are sick, you may experience some vocal symptoms. It is important to take good care of your body and voice at this time to encourage fast healing. While there is no need to go on complete voice rest, it may be wise to cut down on your voice use when you're unwell. Vocal naps are a good way to ensure adequate rest, and SOVT exercises can help to gently exercise your voice while you're not feeling 100%.

Hearing Health:

- While not directly a vocal health concern, maintaining the health of your hearing mechanism is essential for singers.
- Wear hearing protection during all rehearsals and performances involving drum kits or amplified instruments, and l imit exposure to loud noises, even when wearing hearing protection, as damage can occur over time.
- Keep in mind that there is a tendency to speak or sing louder when background noise levels are higher. Do not try to speak in noisy environments, and always ensure adequate foldback for live amplified performances.

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