COVID-19 Voice Care Guide for Singers

Note: This is not intended as medical advice, but rather as a guide to caring for your voice while experiencing and recovering from the symptoms of Covid-19.

Always consult a registered medical professional if you have any health concerns.

You may wish to see a Laryngologist (Voice Specialist ENT Doctor) for a voice evaluation if you continue to experience lingering voice symptoms for more than 2-4 weeks after other symptoms have concluded, or sooner if you feel concerned about your voice or have an important performance coming up.

- Hydration is vital! Drink a minimum of 1.5-2L of water per day.
- In addition to general respiratory inflammation due to the viral infection, the primary cause of voice issues from COVID-19 is the persistent coughing, as this irritates and inflames the vocal folds. So, whenever possible, try to minimise frequency and intensity of coughing. Once the severe 'wet' cough has passed there will likely be a persistent weak and 'dry' cough, try to minimise this by sipping cold water every time you feel the urge to cough. You might also find sucking sweets or lozenges helpful as it produces saliva which can minimise the impulse to cough, but avoid anything containing menthol, eucalyptus, or other drying ingredients as these will further irritate your voice as you inhale the vapour.
- Steaming may help hydrate your vocal folds directly, but don't add anything to the water. Just inhale plain steam for 10 minutes or so at a time. Don't speak/sing for about 20 minutes afterwards. Make sure it's not too hot, and don't continue if it triggers coughing.
- Avoid smoking or vaping completely!
- You should minimise voice use, and avoid extremes of your range, but you don't need to be completely silent unless it's quite painful to make sound. If it's not painful, **very brief** daily use of your voice will help to keep your vocal folds moving, which can help to minimise the swelling and get things back to normal quicker once you recover.

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- Daily gentle voice use might just include saying a few words a day if that's all you can manage, or it might include gentle SOVTs, for example:
    - Straw bubbles into plenty of water, preferably a wide diameter straw
    - Lip trills/bubbles
    - Gentle humming with teeth apart, lips just touching
    - Keep these at low volume and in a very comfortable range
    - Try single sustained notes, sliding between two notes a tone apart, or maybe as far as a major third, but not large range scales
    - **If it doesn't feel good to vocalise, just keep resting until it does!**
- Don't try to whisper to save your voice, as this is more likely to strain your voice. Either don't speak at all or speak with as much clarity and resonance as you can manage.
- Once symptoms start to subside, and your energy starts to return, you can gradually increase the range and frequency of gentle SOVTs to a few times a day, up to 10 minutes at a time if it feels good. Stick to slides/glides for the first few days, and don't try to increase the range too quickly. If you feel sharp pain in your throat when you make sound, continue to rest the voice until the pain subsides.
- Pay attention to the sensations in your voice - if it feels resonant and effortless you can gently stretch further, but if it feels effortful and the voice tires easily stick to a very small range and rest frequently.
- Mental wellbeing is closely connected to vocal wellbeing. If you are feeling anxious or stressed out at any point, don't be afraid to consult a mental health professional for help and advice.

If you have any questions or concerns about your voice while recovering from COVID-19, consult a qualified Voice Teacher, a Speech Language Pathologist, or a Laryngologist.

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