

VOCAL HEALTH

Singers are athletes and need to approach their careers with that in mind

Training

- Diurnal body cycle
 - Sleep pattern
 - Hormone release
- Regular exercise
- Regular voice routine

Travel problems

- Jet lag
- Fatigue
- Sleep disorders
- Environment
 - Heat
 - Humidity
 - Diet
 - Barotrauma
- Unfamiliar infection exposure

General body maintenance

- Exercise
 - Muscle tone
 - Breathing control
 - Separate from singing time
 - Cool down
- Diet
 - Moderation - **NO FADS**
 - Alcohol
 - Caffeine
 - Salt
 - Hydration
 - Control weight
- Regular singing
 - Daily - Singing is a job
 - Warm up and cool down
 - Support group
 - Voice coach
 - Voice instructor
 - Speech pathologist
- Relaxation time
- Preventive maintenance
 - Dental

Feet
Hearing
Vision
Check out unexplained symptoms

Vocal overuse - Heroic schedules

- Speech is voice use
- Balance rehearsal and performance
- Allow specific rest periods
- Talking over noise
- After performance socializing
- Learn how and when to be a listener

Vocal abuse

- Singing or speaking out of range
- Singing without warmup
- Inappropriate roles
- Use of "character voices"
- Speech abuse
 - Shouting
 - Screaming
 - Making "strange noises"
- Singing when fatigued
- Pushing to deal with inappropriate amplification
- Nonperformance abuse
 - Teaching
 - Second job voice use
- Singing against noise
- Singing against pain
- Stop singing if you feel or hear a change in your voice
- Voice teacher or coach - to supervise the growth of your voice
- Menstrual changes
- Vocal "naps" - **ABSOLUTE SILENCE**
- Room temperature liquids
- Spend your energy on prevention not recovery

Danger signs

- Throat tender after singing
- Hoarse at end of singing
- Frequent throat clearing worse after singing
- Dry tickle in throat
- Inability to sing or speak clearly after 24-48 hours of voice rest
- Inability to sing your highest note at pianissimo

Voice rest

- Absolute silence

- Magic slate
 - Nose breathing
 - Noise maker
- Relative rest
 - Avoid
 - Whisper
 - Shout
 - Sing
 - Speak as though 5 feet apart
- Make no sound unless you are paid for it

Environmental abuse - living and rehearsing

- Smoke
 - Particle size
 - Temperature
 - Marijuana
 - Effect on mucus
 - Cancer
- Pollutants
 - Dust
 - Exhausts
 - Fumes
 - Aerosols
 - Perfumes / cosmetics
- Humidity
 - 30-35% minimum
 - 40-50% better
 - Heat / air conditioning
 - Air travel / altitude
 - Mouth breathing

Alcohol

- Dehydrates
- Vasodilates
 - Haemorrhage
 - Oedema
- Effect judgment - control of instrument

Caffeine - remember chocolate

- Jitters
- Vasoconstricts
- Increases heart rate
- Withdrawal headaches

Recreational drugs

- Alter judgment

- Reduces adaptability
- Reduces awareness of abuse or overuse
- Alters motor control
- Mood alterations
- Marijuana
 - Heat
 - Mechanical irritant
- Cocaine
 - Vasoconstriction
 - Septal perforation

Weight control

- Muscle tone
- Posture
- Breath control
- Weigh daily
- Weight gain adds cells - weight loss only empties them

MEDICATIONS

People tend to think of medications as very specific in action and effect. In fact they are much like many other things. They have primary and secondary effects and they tend to have side effects. As a vocal athlete you need to keep your body in a precise balance and innocent or naive use of medications can inadvertently throw things out of balance.

Medications in general

- We are very drug and medication focused
- Almost no drugs are sole therapeutic agents
- Medications are adjunctive
- Medications do not allow you to go on as though nothing is wrong
- Doses and instructions are important
- The human body has performance limitations. Illness changes these limitations.
 Watch for signs of limitation
- Irrational drug use is never an antidote for voice misuse and abuse
- Drugs are neither good or bad. Their value depends on how they are used
- Discuss these issues with your laryngologist. He will not discourage reasonable care but may protect you from harm due to poor judgment
- Be very careful about the advice of colleagues

Cold and sinus remedies - allergy also

- Tend to be multi-ingredients
 - Antihistamines
 - Decongestants
 - Analgesics
 - Aspirin
 - Tylenol
 - Ibuprofen
- Read the list of ingredients and everything else
- Ask pharmacist
- Antihistamine / Decongestant spectrum

Antihistamines

- Tendency to dry
 - Will Effect
 - Nose
 - Oral cavity
 - Pharynx
 - Larynx
 - Trachea
 - Lung
 - Reduce vocal endurance
- Tendency to sedate
 - Easier fatigue
 - Reduced vocal endurance

Decongestants

- Shrink swollen tissues
- Types
 - Oral
 - Topical
- Oral - related to adrenalin
 - Increase heart rate
 - Increase blood pressure
 - Magnify performance anxiety
- Topical - Neosynephrine or Afrin
 - Fewer systemic side effects
 - Greater local irritation
 - Addicting
 - Rebound
 - Never use longer than 4 consecutive days

Expectorants

- Examples
 - Robitussin
 - Entex
 - Humibid
 - SSKI
- Purpose
 - Thin nasal increase secretions
 - Clear chest easier
- Cough remedies
 - Expectorant
 - Cough suppressant

Throat lozenges

- If it numbs - **NO**
- If it stings - **NO**
- Purpose
 - Stimulate saliva flow
 - Stimulate mucus
- Hard candy works as well
- If calories a problem use diabetic hard candy

Throat sprays - Chloraseptic

- If it numbs - hides damage and injury
- If it stings - damages tissue
- Phenol - a tissue preservative

Antibiotics

- Bacterial infections only
- Do not beg for them

- Let your laryngologist decide

Pain relievers - hiding throat pain risks hiding injury

- Aspirin
 - Affects blood clotting
 - Predisposes singers to vocal fold haemorrhages
 - Good anti-inflammatory pain reliever
- Ibuprofen and other anti-inflammatory drugs
 - Same clotting effect as aspirin
- Tylenol
 - Poor anti-inflammatory effect
- Pain can also be treated by
 - Voice rest
 - Hydration
 - Humidity
 - Heat

Corticosteroids

- These drugs are safe and effective but only in the right circumstances
- Trust your laryngologist
- Hormone secreted by adrenal gland
- Treat acute inflammatory swelling
- Problems
 - Calcium depletion
 - Sodium retention
 - Fluid retention
 - Reduced resistance to infection
 - Suppression of adrenal gland
 - Effect on thyroid
- Administration
 - Injection
 - Oral
 - Topical
- Topical steroids
 - Stabilize allergic and inflammatory swelling
 - Promote tissue healing
 - No adrenal suppression
 - No bone demineralization
- Drug names
 - Vancenase
 - Vanceril
 - Beconase
 - Rhinocort
 - Flonase
 - Decadron Turbinaire - **DO NOT USE**
- Problems

Delay onset of effect
Yeast overgrowth

Vitamins and minerals

- Do not replace a normal diet
- "ONE A DAY" product is sufficient
- But generic
- If you need it include minerals
- Women add iron
- Megadoses of vitamins are a fad - no scientific basis
- Vitamin C - dries - do not exceed 1 gram per day

Salt water spray (saline)

- Moistener
- Receipt
- 1/4 tsp / cup of water at body temperature
- Buy the cheapest
- Does not replace systemic hydration

Sleep aids - often contain drying agents

Birth control pills

- Hormones
- Tell doctor you are a singer

Diuretics

- Deplete sodium
- Reduce hydration
- Dry mucosa
- Do not reduce "bound fluids"

Antidiarrheal drugs

- Affect involuntary nervous system
- Dry

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HOW DO I DO WITH THESE ILLNESSES

Upper respiratory infection (cold)

- Symptoms last 6-7 days if you treat them
- Symptoms last 6-7 days if you do not treat them
- DO NOT BECOME DESPIRATE
- Increase fluids
- Control fever - requires having a thermometer
- Increase humidity
- Get rest - body and voice
- Vitamin C - if you must do not exceed 1 gram per day
- Treat symptoms as necessary but USE GOOD JUDGMENT

Congested nose

Sudafed 30 mg.

Neosynephrine 1/4% - 3 days ONLY

Drainage in throat

Increase hydration

Cough

Expectorant

Guiafenasin

Cough suppressant

Robitussin CF

Robitussin DM

Sore throat

Moisten

NEVER NUMB

- Fever over 100 degrees - see a physician
- Sinus infection ?

Symptoms

Congestion

Pressure in FACE

Purulent drainage

Tooth ache

Fever

Xray - only way to make certain diagnosis

- Foggy voice on awakening

May be allergy not cold

See if being upright helps

Steam and humidity - 30 minutes

20 minute warmup - if feel all right continue

Chlortrimeton

Sore throat

- Look at throat
 - Compare color of back of throat with palate and cheek mucosa
 - If not noticeably redder relax somewhat
- Take your temperature
- Ask yourself if you have been mouth breathing and if so why
- Gargle

DO NOT USE ANY GARGLE, MOUTHWASH, OR LOZENGE THAT BURNS OR NUMBS

Gargle receipt one

- 1/2 tsp table salt
- 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 1/2 tsp white Karo syrup
- 8 oz warm (not hot) water

Gargle receipt two

Equal parts of

- Hydrogen peroxide
- Water
- Mouthwash - Cepacol or Scope

- See a physician if
 - Fever over 101 degrees
 - Very red throat
 - Patches of pus on throat

Hoarseness - any change in a singer's usual sound or capability

- This advice is for mild or transient hoarseness
- 3 parts of larynx affect hoarseness
 - Laryngeal muscles
 - Mucosa - vocal fold cover
 - Glands - produce lubrication
- Fatigue hoarseness
 - Muscles
 - Loss of strength and control
 - Like the tired shaky feeling of heavy work
 - Mucosa
 - Oedema from the collisions of the folds
 - Like the origin of a blister
 - Rest will reverse
 - Can lead to nodules
 - Glands - diffuse thickening
- Cold/allergy hoarseness
 - Muscles - usually not affected
 - Mucosa
 - Diffuse oedema
 - Not early symptom
 - Glands
 - Major changes in stickiness and thickness of mucus
 - Frequent throat clearing
 - Treatment
 - Hydration
 - Expectorants
 - NO DECONGESTANTS**

- Acid reflux laryngitis
 - Mild hoarseness
 - Heartburn
 - Belchiness
 - Bad taste in mouth in AM
 - Perhaps ear pain
 - Lump in throat feeling
 - Treatment
 - No food or drink 2-3 hours before bedtime
 - Elevate head of bed
 - Reduce caffeine and alcohol
 - Use antacids at bedtime
- See laryngologist if not better quickly

Allergy - highly complex

- Genetic - 50%
- Symptomatic population - 20%
- Seasonal or perinial
- How it affects singers
 - Oedema
 - Change in fluid in tissue
 - Mouth breathing
 - Pain uncommon - can have cheek pressure
- Evaluation
 - Careful history - especially for seasonal
 - Skin tests
 - Scratch
 - Intradermal
 - RAST
- Treatment - based on severity of symptoms
 - Avoidance
 - Symptomatic therapy
 - Antihistamines
 - Drying
 - Sedating
 - Decongestants
 - Some help
 - Topical steroids
 - Safe
 - Need to keep sustained tissue level
 - Desensitization
 - For people not well controlled otherwise
 - Do not test patients unless symptoms sufficient to consider shots
- You can be allergic to foods - generally less a problem for singers and much harder to work up

Sinus drainage

- Change in viscosity of mucus NOT volume of drainage
- Caused by inadequate moisture or hydration

Sinus headache

- A MISNOMER
- Sinus pain - cheek pain associated with sinusitis
- Hatband, forehead or eye pain is caused by neck and shoulder muscle contraction
- Treatment
 - Heat to neck and shoulders
 - Identify activity that triggers
 - Relaxation
 - Analgesics

Cough

- Cause - injury to tracheal tissue triggering cough
- Chest symptom NOT head symptom
- Treatment
 - Expectorants
 - Cough suppressants
 - Humidity
 - Hydration
 - Decongestants and antihistamines - **NEVER**
- Pneumonia ?
 - Fever
 - Pain (pleurisy)
 - Productive cough - PUS
- Therapeutic goal
 - Loosen secretions
 - Suppress cough
- Vibration of coughing produces hoarseness

Dry throat

- Dehydration
 - Medication
 - Stress - adrenalin effect
- Treatment
 - Relaxation
 - Stop medications
 - Hydration
 - Humidity

Asthma

- Spasm of bronchioles
- Types
 - Allergic induced
 - Activity induced
- Requires medical management by someone who understands singers
- You cannot manage this yourself - seek good help

Heartburn

- Symptom of reflux oesophagitis and/or laryngitis
- See section on reflux

Tickle in throat

- Often a symptom of allergy
- Treatment
 - Hydration
 - Sugar lozenge

Ear symptoms

- Itching ears
 - Causes
 - Dry skin
 - Q tips
 - Treatment
 - No Q tips
 - Sweet oil - a purified olive oil
- Stopped up ears - ear pressure
 - Hearing affected
 - Wax
 - Fluid in middle ear
 - Infection
 - Hearing NOT affected
 - Poor Eustachian tube function
 - Consider nose and throat symptoms
 - It may not be safe to fly with stopped up ears
 - Barotrauma
 - Neosynephrine
- Ear pain
 - Hearing affected - ear infection - see physician
 - Hearing NOT affected
 - Referred pain
 - TMJ pain - most common cause in absence of other symptoms

Temporomandibular arthralgia (TMJ pain)

- Misuse of jaw joints
 - Asymmetrical chewing
 - Stress
 - Bruxism - tooth grinding
 - Dental problems
 - Injury
- Pain may be
 - Joint pain
 - Muscle spasm
 - Both
- Treatment
 - Correct reason for asymmetric chewing
 - Soft diet
 - No unnecessary chewing - gum
 - Heat
 - Analgesics
- Consult dentist
 - Second opinion if
 - Advice seems illogical
 - ANY invasive procedure recommended
 - Arthroscopy
 - Surgery

Do I have cancer

- Symptoms

- Voice change

- Swallowing change

- "Funny feeling" and/or ear pain

- Symptoms do not fluctuate

- Symptoms persist over 4 weeks

- Age over 55 years

- Life style

- Alcohol and tobacco

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WHEN YOU SEE A PHYSICIAN

Seek someone with an interest in and a knowledge of voice problems. This is almost never a generalist.

Make sure these people know you are a singer

- Care giver
- Surgeon
- Anesthesiologist

Be perfectly honest about your symptoms

Many of your symptoms cannot be seen - be prepared to describe

- How your symptoms began
- How your symptoms feel
- How your symptoms have progressed
- How your symptoms affect singing and speaking
- Everything you have tried and what it has done

Take time to organize your thoughts

Insist he listens to everything you have to tell him. If he will not see someone else

Make certain he answers your questions

Make sure you know what medications he wants you to use

- What they may be expected to do
- How soon they will act
- What are possible side effects
- When do you stop therapy

Ask what you can safely do with your voice and when

If you do not understand what he tells you - ask questions

If you are uncomfortable or his advice seems illogical get another opinion

If you do not get better in the predicted time or if your symptoms change contact the same physician - the additional information will help him give you better care. Seeing a new physician will require starting from scratch costing you unnecessary time and money

This is not a discovery method game of hide and seek. Be absolutely honest and describe things to the best of your ability. Be as organized and precise as you can be and expect him to be the same

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WHEN SOMEONE SUGGESTS SURGERY

Surgery in general

- Be sure everyone who will touch you awake or asleep knows you are a singer
 TAPE ON FOREHEAD
- Do not be shy discussing your voice with the surgeon and the anesthesiologist
- Be aggressive about fluids and humidity after surgery

Vocal tract surgery

- Tonsillectomy
 - Done for recurring infection
 - Generally safe with a good surgeon and anesthesiologist
 - Choose general anesthesia
- Nasal surgery
 - If recommended for medical reasons have it done
 - Discuss airway with surgeon especially if the surgery is cosmetic

Neck surgery

- If for malignancy you have no choice
- If thyroid discuss
 - Recurrent laryngeal nerve
 - Dealing with "strap muscles" and impact on voice

Dento-facial surgery

- Generally done for bite and to avoid damage to teeth or jaw joint
- Be very cautious - **SECOND OPINION**

Laryngeal surgery for nodules or polyps

- Be very cautious
- Get second opinion
- Early treatment of voice problems will usually prevent the need for this worry