

What does it take to keep your voice healthy for auditions, performances, and everything else you do? In recognition of World Voice Day, Dr. Wendy LeBorgne, voice pathologist and singing voice specialist, shares her top five tips to help you be at your best vocally.

(majoringinmusic.com)

1. Train your voice and body just like an athlete: Learn proper singing technique, don't overuse the voice, get plenty of rest, eat a balanced, healthy diet. Singers are like vocal gymnasts who traverse their artistic range with apparent ease and flexibility. Gymnasts are extremely disciplined people who spend hours perfecting their craft and are much more likely than the general public to sustain an injury. Professional singers carry some of these same risks and must maintain a disciplined practice schedule with intervals of rest and recovery to perform at an optimal level, regardless of genre.

2. Let your voice shine. Attempting to imitate someone else's voice or singing style can require you to sing or do things outside of your comfortable physiologic range or current vocal skill level. This could result in vocal injury. Also remember that if you are imitating someone who is already famous, their millions have been made. You want to be the next star that they hire, not just a copycat.

3. Pace yourself. When you are preparing for a show or audition season, you must pace yourself and your voice. You would not think of trying to get all of your exercise in at the gym by going one day a week for 5 hours. Rather, you should sing (and exercise) in smaller increments of time (30-45 minutes) each day, gradually building muscular skill and stamina. As you improve, you should be able to increase the amount of time as well as the difficulty of vocal skill.

4. Avoid phonotraumatic behaviors such as yelling, screaming, loud talking, singing too loudly. When you increase your vocal loudness, your vocal folds bang together harder (much like clapping your hands really hard, loud, and fast). After a period of doing this, your vocal folds begin to react to the impact by becoming swollen and red. Long term phonotrauma can lead to vocal fold changes such as vocal fold nodules.

5. Adequate hydration. Be sure to drink plenty of non-caffeinated beverages throughout the day. Although nothing you eat or drink gets onto the vocal folds, adequate oral hydration allows the mucus to act like a lubricant instead of glue.

- See more at: <http://majoringinmusic.com/five-tips-to-keep-your-voice-healthy/#sthash.WjGxVk0g.dpuf>

Performing with a Sore Throat or Hoarseness

Performing during an illness can be a slippery slope. If you have throat pain or hoarseness you should see your ENT (ear, nose, throat physician) so that they can medically evaluate whether your vocal situation is safe to perform on. Sometimes, medications or a steroid may provide some relief of symptoms, but could potentially give you a false sense of "being well" and you may over-sing, resulting in further vocal injury. Ultimately, if you are sick, there is no show or role worth risking the rest of your career for, none of your cast-mates want your illness, and sometimes rest is best. There are times when you must perform through an illness and when you do, think of it as running on a sprained ankle: you learn to make adjustments to "get through." If you do this time and time again, you will begin to develop new (often inappropriate) muscle patterns for voice production.
