

The Singer's Preventative Maintenance Program

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The Singer's Preventative Maintenance Program

-  The goal of the singer's preventative maintenance program is to avoid vocal injury and early vocal fatigue through good vocal hygiene and by incorporating low impact singing exercises which refresh the voice and strengthen the musculature of singing, without any unnecessary tension or pressure.
-  The following recommendations can be followed on a daily basis to maintain good vocal health and wellness, but can also be used when vocal pathology is present.

What is Vocal Hygiene?

- 🌐 Webster's New College Dictionary defines "hygiene" as: "conditions and practices promoting or preserving health."
- 🌐 Vocal hygiene therefore is:
- 🌐 **TAKING CARE OF YOUR VOICE!!!**
- 🌐 Taking good care of the singing voice starts with taking good care of your speaking voice.
- 🌐 Start by avoiding bad speaking habits.

Healthy Speech

1. Speak at an efficient pitch, with good airflow, and avoid vocal/glottal fry. 
2. Don't compete with loud noises, traffic, loud parties, games etc.
3. Don't have long conversations in the car, train, plane. Maintain good posture and head alignment.
4. Eliminate shouting, screaming, and extended loud talking or non-stop talking.
5. Avoid excessive throat clearing or coughing.
6. When talking on the phone, talk at comfortable, conversational level. Avoid use of cell phone in noisy environments.
7. **DO NOT SPEAK IF IT HURTS!!**

Practicing healthy speech and singing

- 🌍 A singer should always warm up the voice first thing in the morning. This makes speaking throughout the day much more comfortable.
- 🌍 Support your speaking voice the way you support your singing voice.
- 🌍 Begin with the *6 areas of relaxation*:

McClosky's

Six Areas of Relaxation

1. **The Face:** slowly massage the facial muscles starting with the hairline and forehead and moving down to the eyebrows, eye sockets, temples, cheeks, jaw and lips.
2. **The Tongue:** let your tongue hang out over your front teeth and lower lip. Move the tongue slowly in and out until you feel the tension release.
3. **The Swallowing Muscles:** gently massage the muscles under the chin.
4. **The Jaw:** slowly move the jaw up and down with your hand.
5. **The Larynx:** using the “key grip” gently grasp your thyroid cartilage and move the larynx from side to side.
6. **The Head and Neck:** allow your head to fall forward. Clasping your hands behind your head, gently pull downward for a good stretch.

Hydration and The Mucous Blanket

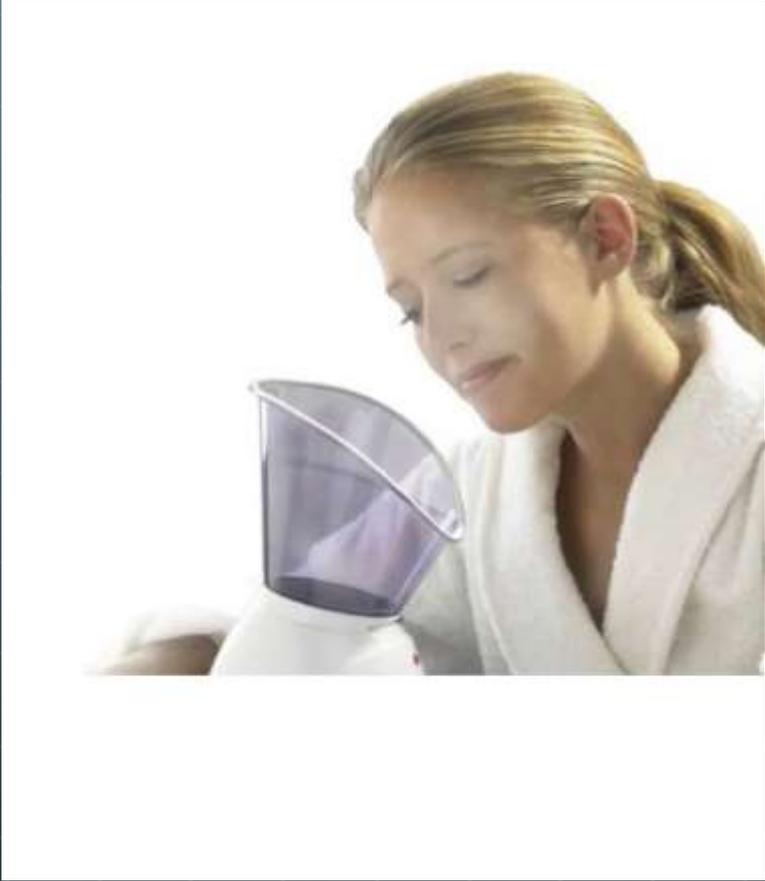
Improve hydration by
DRINKING MORE WATER

- $\frac{1}{2}$ body weight in number of ounces per day
- 8-10 glasses per day
(drink enough to “pee pale”)

Hydration and The Mucous Blanket: dehydrated larynx



Try Breathing Steam: one of my favorites!!



FLUIDIFY BODY SECRETIONS

- use mycolytic drug such as
guaifenesin syrup:
or tablet form: **MUCINEX**

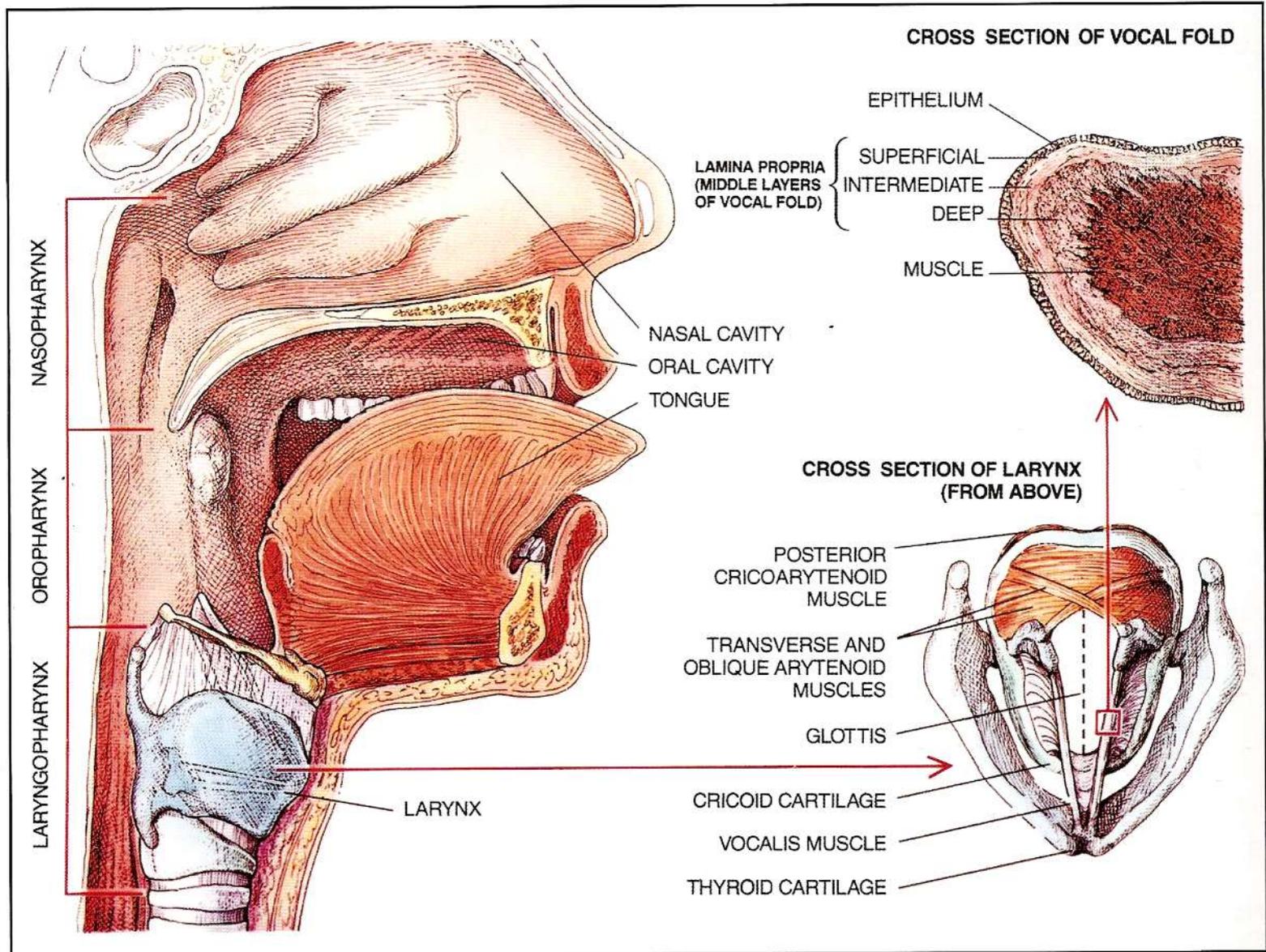


Exercise



Semi-occluded Vocal Tract Exercises

 There are many vocal warm ups in the Singing Voice Specialist's repertoire which involve a narrowing of the vocal tract anywhere along that tract from the lips to the glottis.



Semi-occluded Vocal Tract Exercises

- 🌐 Ingo Titze, who has written and researched extensively on the concept of semi-occluded (narrow) vocal tract exercises, has this to say about their effectiveness:
- 🌐 “a [narrower] vocal tract air column that vibrates (up and down) above the vocal folds can create a reactive push and pull on the tissue surface so that vocal fold vibration is reinforced.”

Semi-occluded Vocal Tract Exercises

-  In other words, despite the common belief that “open mouth” and/or “open throat” exercises are most effective, occluding the vocal tract during vocal warm-up has proven benefits for singers and professional voice users.
-  The semi-occluded vocal tract posture can be beneficial for injured voices and as a preventative measure, if used in the singer’s daily practice regimen.

Vocal Function Exercises: *Soft Phonation*

-  The masters of the historic Italian school of singing routinely taught isometric-isotonic exercises such as the *messa di voce* (sustaining a pitch while increasing volume, maintaining at a loud dynamic, and ending with a gradual decrease in volume).
-  The goal of such an exercise is to allow the different muscle groups involved in phonation (voice production) to contract slowly for a sustained period, while at the same time changing mass and length at a very slow rate.

Vocal Function Exercises: *Soft Phonation*

- 🌐 Joseph Stemple's Vocal Function Exercises (VFE) are isometric-isotonic exercises originally designed to strengthen the laryngeal musculature and improve vocal efficiency in injured voices.
- 🌐 They differ from the traditional *messa di voce* in that they are not concerned with a change in volume.
- 🌐 VFE are physiologic exercise warm ups, similar to the gentle, gradual stretching regimen an athlete uses before more strenuous activity.

Vocal Function Exercises: *Soft Phonation*

1. Sustain /i/ as long as possible on a comfortable pitch in mid-range.
 2. Glide from the lowest to the highest note in the pitch range on /o/.
 3. Glide from the highest to the lowest note in the pitch range on /o/.
 4. Sustain the notes C, D, E, F, G for as long as possible on /o/.
-  Each exercise should be done as softly as possible, while using extreme frontal focus on both the /i/ and /o/ vowels. For exercise 1, use a distinctly nasal /i/ sound, with the nasal port open. For exercises 2-4, use closed, tight lips for the /o/ shape, maintaining a “kazoo-like” buzz on the lips throughout phonation. Remember that these are *not* singing exercises, and that tone quality should not in any way resemble *bel canto*.

Lip Buzz

 Firmly close the lips in the same embouchure posture used by a trumpet player. The lips must be allowed to “buzz” without any excess air escaping. Inhale deeply and blow through the closed lips, maintaining a steady pressure on the lips, and a steady airflow. Begin with slides up and down from lower to upper range, always maintaining both the vibration and forward resonance on the lips.

 Next, try a simple, major pentatonic scale:

1-2-3-4-5-4-3-2-1

 Eventually, add a slide of a fifth to the scale, singing all in one breath:

 1-2-3-4-5-4-3-2-1----5----1

Straw Phonation

-  The same benefits listed above for the lip buzz can be gained using a straw as an extension of the lips. Using a small straw (preferably a stirrer straw), place the straw firmly between the lips, tightening the lips enough to hold the straw in place.
-  As with the lip buzz, during phonation, vibration and forward resonance is maintained on the lips. However, vibration is now transferred through the shaft of the straw, much like the vibration of the mouthpiece or reed is transferred to the shaft of a wind instrument.
-  Straw phonation may be the answer for those who cannot establish a consistent lip buzz.

The use of Nasal Resonance

-  For centuries, singers have been taught to avoid any nasality in their singing tone when phonating non-nasal sounds. Singing teachers consider any nasal vowel sounds other than the French nasals to be suspect, and eliminated immediately.
-  Contrarily, the coupling of a nasal consonant such as /m/, /n/ and /ŋ/ with a vowel is quite common, for an important reason. The nasal resonance of those consonants can greatly aid in the forward placement of the subsequent vowel.

The use of Nasal Resonance

-  In light of the scientific evidence, it is important to recognize that nasal resonance, when used judiciously, can be beneficial for vowel phonation, not only when coupling a nasal with a vowel during warm-up, but as a method for increasing the singer's formant, a.k.a. the "ring" of the voice.
-  One strategy for finding a balance of nasal and non-nasal resonance when singing is to sing the note or phrase with the nasal port completely open, exhibiting the full nasality used in the first VFE exercise, and then modifying the phonation, blending only a minimal amount of nasal resonance in with a ringing, forward placement.

Voice Placement

- 🌐 “Dan la masque” The speaking and singing voice should be projected from “mask”- the area of the face that includes the bridge and sides of the nose down to, and around the lips.
- 🌐 This can be practiced and learned using simple hum:
 1. Make an *mmmm* sound with your teeth clenched-note that the vibrations are only in the nose
 2. Make the *mmmm* with the teeth as far apart as possible, without opening the lips-note that the sound is deep in the throat and very dark.
 3. Repeat with the lips together and teeth slightly parted-note the lips tingle, and vibrations can be felt throughout the oral-nasal area.

Vocal Onset and Release

- 🌐 An important development of the *Bel Canto* school of singing is the technique of vocal fold positioning prior to phonation known as the *coup de glotte* or glottal attack.
- 🌐 The glottal attack occurs as the result of the vocal folds (or vocal cords) being firmly and completely adducted (closed together) just prior to phonation.
- 🌐 Richard Miller's vocal onset and release exercises (VORE), or "balanced onset," encourages more balanced laryngeal activity and *prephonatory tuning*.
- 🌐 The balanced onset avoids both the breathy whisper and the hard glottal attack.

Vocal Onset and Release

-  The Vocal Onset and Release Exercises (VORE) can be seen as a compliment to the VFE, in that, if performed as a follow-up to the VFE as part of the singer's daily regimen, they might further increase not only vocal efficiency, but respiratory efficiency as well, giving the singer a more complete technical workout.
-  A recent pilot study at Arkansas State University comparing VORE with VFE proved that the VORE can improve vocal efficiency in undergraduate singers by reducing breath-mixture during phonation.

Vocal Onset and Release

- On each note of the four-note chromatic scale the singer will produce the following across a five measure pattern, sung in 4/4 meter:
- Four quarter notes sung at moderate tempo on the vowel /i/, breathing between each tone-followed by:
- Eight eighth notes sung at moderate tempo on the vowel /e/, breathing between each tone-followed by:
- Four sets of three triplets sung at moderate tempo on the vowel /a/, breathing between each triplet set-followed by:
- Four sets of four sixteenth notes sung at moderate tempo on the vowel /o/, breathing between each set of sixteenths-followed by:
- One whole note, sustained for four counts on the vowel /u/.

 **QUESTIONS??????**

 **KEEP GOING??????**

The Common Cold

- 🌐 Rest your body and your voice.
- 🌐 Drink extra water to keep the mucous thin.
- 🌐 If it hurts to speak, do not try to sing!
- 🌐 **YOU CAN INJURE YOUR VOICE IF YOU SING WHEN YOU ARE SICK!!**
- 🌐 Do the Mental Work of singing when ever possible.

Acute Laryngitis

- 🌐 Laryngitis is defined as “swelling of the tissue of the larynx” – more specifically the vocal folds. The entire larynx will also appear red.
- 🌐 Acute laryngitis is caused by a viral infection (such as a cold).
- 🌐 Symptoms include loss of phonation, pitch breaks and loss of range.
- 🌐 Complete vocal rest, hydration and a mild steroid are recommended.

Acute Laryngitis

Acute Laryngitis 3

Chronic Laryngitis

- 🌐 Chronic laryngitis is caused by vocal abuse:
 - cheering, yelling or screaming, talking over noise in a loud environment, or just continuous, forceful voice use at a loud volume without adequate air support.
- 🌐 The tissue of the vocal folds breaks down, causing edema (swelling), thick mucosal secretions, and if not treated, vocal nodules.
- 🌐 A severe coughing attack can also cause chronic laryngitis.
- 🌐 Vocal rest and voice therapy are recommended.

Vocal Nodules

- 🌐 Vocal nodules are caused by repeated vocal abuse and/or untreated chronic laryngitis.
- 🌐 Besides the behaviors listed above, nodules can also be caused by hard glottal attacks, excessive throat clearing, lack of good hydration, and untreated reflux disease.
- 🌐 Nodules are callous-like lesions that form on the anterior and middle one-third of the vocal folds. At first they are soft and easily treated.
- 🌐 Left untreated, they can become hard.
- 🌐 The most common characteristics are breathy phonation and pitch breaks.

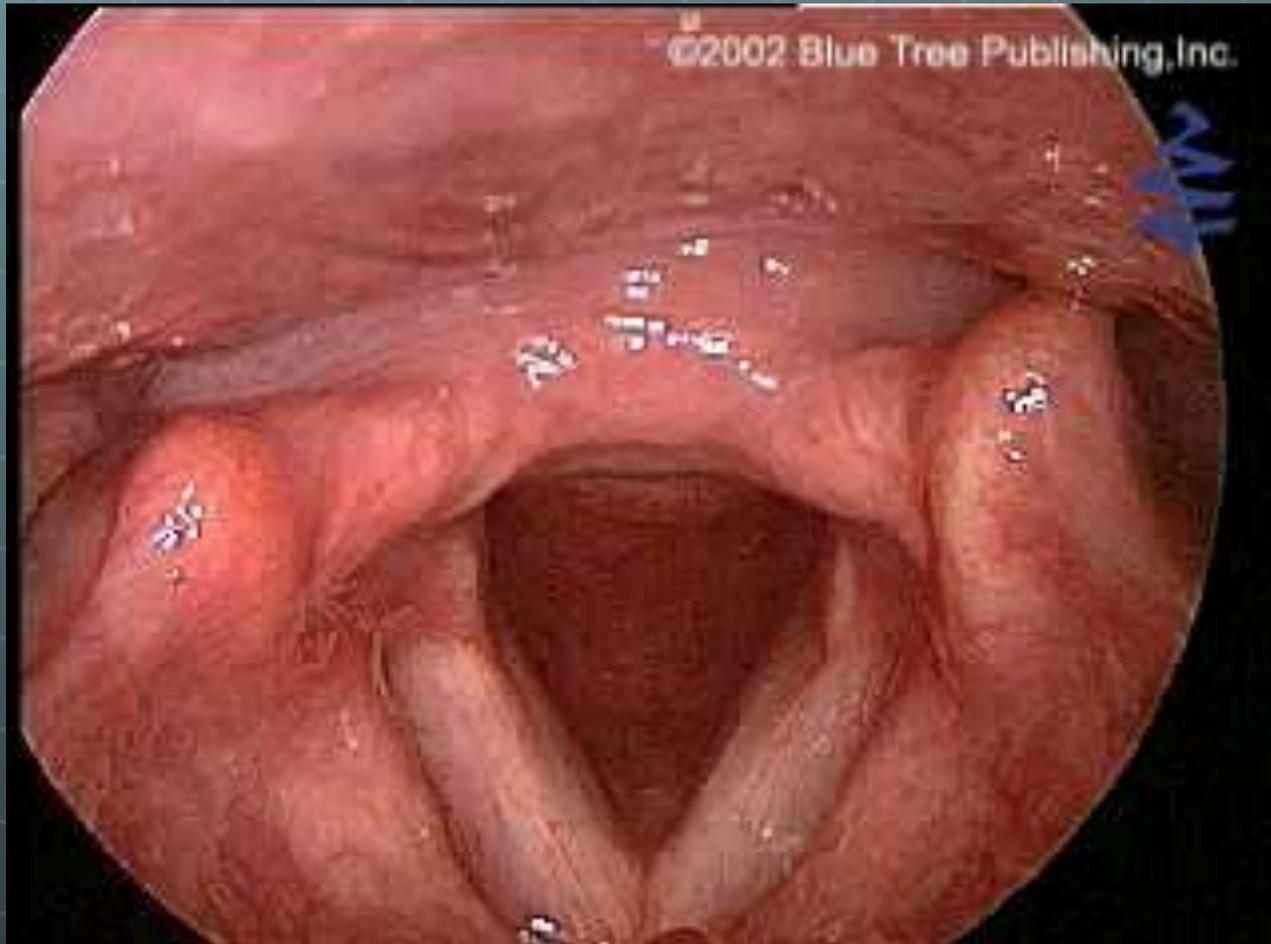
Vocal Nodules



GERD!!!!

- 🌐 Gastro-esophageal-reflux-disease is a VERY common condition affecting LOTS of people.
- 🌐 It can cause damage to the vocal folds. The main symptom of GERD is heartburn.
- 🌐 If you are clearing your throat a lot after eating, it is likely you have GERD.
- 🌐 Avoid caffeine, spicy or fried food and in some cases any foods with gluten.
- 🌐 Avoid carbonated beverages.
- 🌐 Raise the head of the bed when sleeping.

GERD



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