

Tips to Support You in Taking Care of Your Child's Voice

Encourage:

- **Water/Fluids:** Infants (6 to 26 pounds) 3-6 cups/day. Children (26 to 100 pounds) 4-8 cups/day or check urine colour. If it is clear, your child is getting adequate fluids!
- **Take talking breaks:** Give your voice 15 minutes of rest for every hour it is used. If your throat feels dry or tired, or your voice is getting hoarse, reduce your voice use. The hoarseness is a warning sign that your vocal folds are irritated.
- **“Good talking” rules:** No screaming or shouting, no interrupting, no talking over one another or the TV/radio, no yelling from one room to another.
- **Good health habits:** Keep a healthy diet and develop good sleep habits (e.g., establish a consistent sleep schedule, create a bedtime routine). Make sure your child has regular “downtime”. Avoid exposure to cigarette smoke and dust.
- **Your own good voice habits:** Talk with normal loudness and use a slower speaking pace. When upset or angry, get your point across by talking firmly and getting down to your child's level.
- **Humidify your home including bedrooms.** Remember, moist is good for the voice.

Replace unhealthy voice habits:

- **Instead of cheering, yelling, or shouting:** Use gestures or body language that doesn't involve using the voice such as clapping or jumping up and down to show excitement or touch someone's arm to get their attention.
- **Instead of clearing your throat or coughing:** Swallow a sip of water. Too much throat clearing or coughing can injure your vocal folds and make you hoarse.
- **Instead of talking over noise:** Turn off or turn down the noise source (TV, hair dryer, etc.) or move to another area of the room that is quieter.
- **Instead of talking a lot when you have a cold/flu or sore throat:** Try to limit talking, drink plenty of liquids, and get lots of rest.
- **Instead of breathing in through your mouth:** breathe in through your nose. Mouth breathing can dry out the mouth, along with other effects. Nose breathing filters dust and other allergens and humidifies air as it enters the body.
- **Instead of using loud sound effects** (e.g., car zooming, growling, imitating a siren, using cartoon voices etc.), name the sounds instead (e.g., beep beep, zoom)
- **Instead of whispering,** talk using a soft, quiet voice (like a “confidential voice”).
- **Instead of talking when you are tired:** Go to bed!

Reference: Markham Stouffville Hospital Child Development Programs - “Take Care of Your Child's Voice” Handout