

EVERYDAY VOICE CARE

Chapter 11

First Aid for Hoarseness

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Did you spend the weekend partying over noise? Did you shout to someone for help and feel vocally rough afterwards? If this happens regularly, there's a bigger problem, but if your voice is generally healthy and flexible, here's a recovery recipe.



Consider it a single-use package.

1. Rest the voice as much as possible for 48-72 hours. **SERIOUSLY** no singing/talking, except the exercises in #4 below.
2. Drink 2 quarts/liters of water or tea per day, 3 quarts/liters if you're a large-size person. Absolutely no alcohol or coffee or anything you are even mildly allergic to.
3. Breathe (plain) steam for 5-10 minutes, 1-2x each day, as described in Chapter 5.
4. For 1-2 minutes every hour or two throughout the day, use one of the following exercises. Choose one or the other or alternate/mix & match. These are physiologically the safest types of vocalizing and may help cellular healing, similar to the warm-ups in Chapter 10 but done for a shorter time. Permitted exercises are:
 - a. Light easy humming on a medium tone or pitch glides up & down, with very nasal/buzzy feeling in the front of the face.
 - b. Light easy-quality "oooh" through a straw in medium-to-high pitch range.

Do not force the voice; if it's hard to make sound, stay quiet. Skip this vocal step entirely if you lost your voice very suddenly, or if your doctor has diagnosed a vocal-cord hemorrhage or high risk for one. Such conditions need complete vocal rest, and a diagnostic throat exam if you haven't had one yet.

5. NO weight lifting or heavy labor that involves holding your breath AT ALL. Go easy on abdominal workouts too, unless you're really good at not holding your breath when you crunch.

6. Maximum self-care in general: light healthy meals, moderate exercise, prayer/meditation, massage/bodywork, and good sleep.

7. See the best laryngologist you can afford IF:

- a. Your voice disappeared in an instant, or
- b. You feel pain in your voice or throat, or
- c. There is no improvement in 2-3 days, or
- d. Your voice doesn't return to normal in 10-14 days, or
- e. You can force your voice to sound normal again, but you secretly know that it isn't!!

Everyone wants a magic pill to make hoarseness disappear. All you can do is make problems disappear from your future life—by preventing them before they start. So use the vocal time-out to re-read this book and its resources. Meditate on your ability to take better care of yourself, set limits on vocal demands, and protect your fabulous-but-not-infinite voice from now on. It's also a good time to use my *Visualizations for Singers* CD (see my website).

Don't speak unless you can improve on the silence.

Spanish Proverb

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