KEEPING A CLEAR VOICE
## Indicators That You May Have a Voice Problem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unresolved hoarseness, croakiness, airiness or roughness of the voice</th>
<th>Unresolved throat pain, before, during or after speaking or singing</th>
<th>The need to constantly clear the throat or lump sensation in the throat</th>
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<tr>
<td>Loss of voice before, during or after singing or speaking</td>
<td>Constant dryness or scratchiness of the throat</td>
<td>Increasing effort when speaking or singing</td>
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<td>Loss of pitch control, range, volume or strength</td>
<td>Burning sensation in throat, on awakening or after eating</td>
<td>Weakness or difficulty when projecting your voice</td>
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<td>Unexplained changes in your vocal tone and/or quality</td>
<td>Unresolved throat muscle pain or tension</td>
<td>Unintentionally producing more than one pitch at a time</td>
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<td>Uncontrolled pitch changes when speaking or singing</td>
<td>Sudden new vocal breaks or cracks</td>
<td>New and unexpected gap in middle of your range</td>
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WHEN SHOULD YOU SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE?

Generally speaking, if any of the above symptoms persist for longer than 2 weeks, though as a professional voice user you may wish to seek expert medical advice earlier.

Voice organisations such as the British Voice Association will have a Voice Clinic list, alternatively ask other singers or a singing teacher for an ENT/Laryngologist specialist recommendation.

There isn’t a single product you can buy over the counter which will heal vocal damage. Vocalzone is designed to soothe overuse & irritation of the voice, and will not repair vocal damage!

**Remember:** You can not replace your voice, so take care of your precious instrument. As a singer you should consider yourself a vocal athlete.

DID YOU KNOW?

The majority of vocal fold injuries in performers are behavioural and can be resolved by making some small and easy changes...
MAINTAIN GOOD HYDRATION

The vocal folds vibrate at high speeds when we sing, they need to be well hydrated to work effectively.

Drink water throughout the day; enough to ensure your urine is a pale straw-yellow colour. Note that when you drink the fluid does not touch your vocal folds, they need to hydrate at a cellular level.

GET ADEQUATE REST

Getting a good night’s sleep is an essential habit to establish for any performer. Your mind and body need this time to rest and recover. The benefits of sleeping well contribute to improving your memory, attention span, stress levels, immune system, general health, muscle recovery (including your vocal fold muscles) and will even increase your life span!

AVOID LATE-NIGHT EATING

If the stomach is working overtime when it should be resting it could result in stomach acid spilling onto your larynx, causing vocal fold swelling, hoarseness and croakiness.

WATCH WHAT YOU EAT

Allergy or intolerance to certain foods may cause excess mucus production, wheezing and throat clearing. If you have reflux you should avoid acid producing foods such as tomatoes, spices, caffeine, and onions.

A healthy diet will give your body the energy it requires to perform.
LOOKING AFTER YOUR VOICE

PERFECT PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT
Find a great singing teacher who understands the vocal instrument, how to develop and maintain it. Regular vocal practice and training is essential but don’t practice excessively; short and frequent is best e.g. 20-30 mins twice a day.

ALWAYS WARM UP
It may sound pretty obvious, but you’d be shocked at how many people miss doing a warm up before singing. Get a warm up regime from a singing teacher and use it before rehearsal, performance or recording. Remember you’re a vocal athlete.

DON’T SING IN ENVIRONMENTAL EXTREMES
Your body doesn’t get on well with extreme changes whether hot, cold, dry or humid environments. Take the right precautions to keep your voice at a comfortable temperature, particularly when in use.

AVOID THE SICK BUG
It’s pretty harsh, but if any of your friends or relatives are under the weather, tell them to keep clear! However minor, a cough, cold or flu can keep you and your voice out of action for several days, if not more. Also note that singing on a cold can lead to vocal injury.
You don’t have to be performing to cause a voice related injury. In fact, there are a number of professions such as teaching or working in customer services which have high vocal work loads and can cause vocal injury.

Straw exercises are a great way to warm up the voice for professionals in these fields. They’re quick and relatively straightforward vocal exercises which can be done almost anywhere!

**How does it work?**

By sealing your lips around the straw and making a sound through the straw we are helping the vocal folds vibrate more effectively by reflecting energy back on the vocal folds, increasing acoustic energy and reducing vocal fold collision. In other words this exercise helps to stretch the vocal folds whilst keeping them balanced and free.

Straw exercises are a quick and effective warm up for light to moderate voice use, however for more intensive vocal use, such as singing and prolonged projecting like acting or radio presenting, you should extend your warm up by using other semi-occluded vocal tract and voice exercises.

It’s important to find a routine which works best for you and your needs. If you’re unsure consult with a reputable singing teacher or vocal coach who can help you develop a tailored regime.
WHY NOT HAVE A GO?

Below are a series of sample straw exercises for you to try. If you find these exercises beneficial, we would suggest consulting a vocal expert to coach you through the various correct techniques.

1. Start by counting to ten out loud. Take note of how your voice feels (effort level) and tone and pitch.

2. Vocalise on a long AH, as in ‘father’. At the same time insert the straw between closed lips, continue the sound through the straw making sure no air escapes from your lips or nose. Also check there is a steady air-stream coming out the end of the straw.

3. Still on the AH imitate a motor bike revving up continuously. Do this for as long as your breath lasts then repeat 4 more times.

4. Continue the AH. Glide up and down your range, starting small initially, then getting increasingly wider glides till you are sirening through all your range from bottom to top and back down. Repeat 4 more times.

5. Now as before but do over your favourite scales and melodies for 2-3 minutes.

6. Count to ten out loud. How does your voice feel now? Is it easier? Has the pitch gone up? Is it richer and more resonant? If you did the exercises correctly then you should feel a difference, for the better.

What straw should I use?

We would recommend completing this exercise with a cocktail straw (3-4mm diameter).

If this is proving too difficult, try using two or three of these straws at the same time to begin with.

Want to find out more?
Head on over to YouTube, and do a search for “Vocalzone Straw Exercise” to watch our video tutorial on this technique.
There is no one size fits all when it comes to vocal health. This booklet is designed to provide you with a brief overview which you can then build upon once you’ve figured out what works best for you; for instance, some people can tolerate dairy products and others can’t. If you notice certain foods, fluids, conditions or environments seem to be affecting your vocal well-being then seek further advice, eliminate or address the issue. Don’t change medications without consulting your doctor first.

Don’t forget, if you suspect vocal damage, always seek the appropriate medical advice and limit your voice use until you’ve had appropriate consultation from your medical professional.

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