



# WELLNESS WORKS....

at Brain Injury Community Re-entry (Niagara) Inc.

A Publication from Brain Injury Community Re-entry Niagara's Wellness Works Committee

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It is something we use every day but yet never think about it. It is as unique as our fingerprints and can be used for both positive and negative effect. When we lose it, we're frustrated and desperate to get it back; but yet few of us do anything to avoid losing it.

**What is 'it'? It is our voice.**



## VOCAL HYGIENE

Is about how we take care of our voices and how we can avoid voice problems such as: nodules, polyps, sores as well as cancer and diseases that paralyze the vocal cords.

A few facts about our voices:

- ✦ With the exception of the muscles around the eyes, those of the human larynx have more nerves than any other muscle in the human body, even though we only use around 1/3 of their capacity in speaking
- ✦ Through our voice we can convey affection, bitterness, pleasure, disgust...all emotions
- ✦ Everyday products (such as aspirin or cough drops) can lead to long-term damage of the vocal cords. Drink more water if you are taking them (6 – 8 glasses is a recommended minimum)
- ✦ Even taking a 5 minute break from speaking can help restore some vocal health
- ✦ Every time we clear our throats, our vocal cords are literally slammed together; which can lead to more irritation and inflammation
- ✦ Eating spicy foods can cause or exacerbate stomach reflux
- ✦ As always, adequate water intake, regular exercise and a well-balanced diet are positive aspects of vocal hygiene and contribute to the overall success of voice use.



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DO	DON'T
Drink plenty of water	Don't clear your throat or cough habitually
Do keep the voice at a comfortable pitch	Don't out-talk or out-sing environmental noise
Do learn to recognize the first signs of vocal fatigue (hoarseness, dry throat, etc.)	Don't use your voice when it feels strained
Do maintain proper humidity, both inside and outside your body	Don't expose your voice to extensive pollution, smoking or chemical fumes
Do allow your breath to replace itself naturally	Don't hold your breath, squeeze or push the voice out

## FACTORS THAT CAN AFFECT THE VOICE:

- ❖ Hearing loss
- ❖ Craniofacial anomalies
- ❖ Hyper-extended jaw
- ❖ Medications
- ❖ Allergies
- ❖ Post nasal drip



## OTHER ABUSIVE PRACTICES:

- ❖ Strained laughing
- ❖ Screaming
- ❖ Impersonations
- ❖ Yodeling
- ❖ Grunting
- ❖ Bulimia
- ❖ Poor sleep patterns
- ❖ Stress
- ❖ Talking too much
- ❖ Aggressive behavior
- ❖ Depression
- ❖ Poor self-esteem

*If you rely on your voice for your livelihood, then you are a professional voice user and it is important that you take good care of your voice. These tips are meant to be helpful to the average voice user. However, if there are changes in the voice that are prolonged and just not 'normal' a visit to your doctor is recommended.*

*For more information please see Canadian Voice Care Foundation; St. Peter's Health Care Services; any speech and language pathologist*