

Where to seek help for yourself

Talk to your GP if you are concerned that you have a persistent voice problem and would like further support. Your GP will be able to refer you to other services, including Adult Speech and Language Therapy services, if they feel it is necessary.



Speech and Language Therapy for Children and Young People in Hackney

If you are concerned that a child at your school has a voice problem, you can refer them to Speech and Language Therapy by talking to your school SENCo and the link Speech and Language Therapist.

Our contact details:

Speech and Language Therapy
Room 31 - D Block,
St Leonard's Hospital, Nuttall Street,
London N1 5LZ
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Look after your Voice

A guide for teachers on protecting, developing and boosting your voice at work



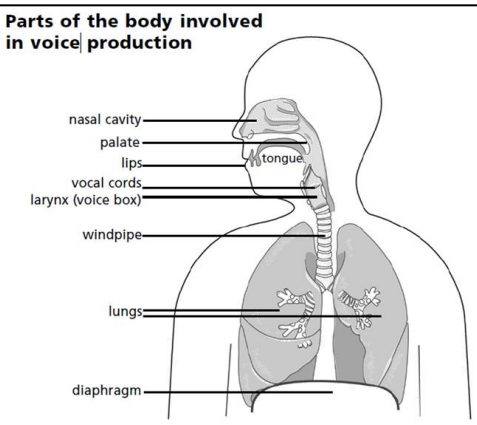
Children's Integrated Speech and Language
Therapy Service for Hackney and the City



Your Voice

Education staff often forget that one of their most important tools is their voice. If you have to speak at work for long periods, in large spaces and to big groups, the effort may put pressure on your voice and cause strain. If the strain is too great voice problems may develop and make the voice less effective. If the speaker is aware of this they can feel less in control and less confident.

Breath is the power for voice; the support and flow of breath from your lungs causes the vocal folds in your larynx (or voice box) to create vibrations. The vibrations, or sound waves, resonate in the space of throat, mouth and nose (and your chest to some extent) and become your voice.



Exercises for a healthy voice

Before you go to work

Try these exercises while you get ready for work (in the shower!), or on your way in (at the bus stop!):

- Stretch up and wave your arms.
- Breathe in, imagining your lungs filling from lower down like balloons. Then exhale slowly to 'ssss' then 'shhh' then 'zzzz'.
- Hum gently to 'mm', feeling the vibration in the upper chest, throat, nose and lips. This will warm up your voice and help increase resonance.
- Practise slides up and down on 'ng', to eliminate breaks in pitch.
- Energise the articulators with a few tongue twisters (e.g. 'Mixed biscuits', 'Peggy Babcock')

During teaching

- Stand tall – shoulder blades sloping down the back, head balanced at the top of the spine to increase breath support.
- Remember to breathe! Allow yourself to breathe deeply and in a relaxed way before you speak. Big breaths generate volume, keeping tension away from the throat. Think of breathing and speaking from the belly rather than from your neck or chest.

Vocal hygiene

To prevent problems, avoid:

- Smoking (or cut down if you can)
- Excessive consumption of alcohol, caffeinated tea, coffee, fizzy drinks, which dry you out
- Medicated lozenges that kill pain (pain is telling you to stop talking); suck nonmedicated pastilles instead
- Heavy/spicy meals last thing at night (can cause indigestion and acid reflux, which inflames the vocal folds)
- Dairy products, which can cause over-production of mucous around vocal folds
- Talking above background noise or yelling in excitement (causes strain)
- Talking in a whisper when your voice starts to go (folds are held in tension and the problem is made worse)
- Clearing your throat unnecessarily or as a mannerism (smacks the folds together, increasing mucous production, which makes you clear your throat again).

Early warnings

Signs of a voice problem may include breaks in the voice (sudden stoppages), unexpected changes of pitch (voice all over the place), changes in vocal quality (hoarseness), changes in the body (sore throat), increased effort to talk (voice tires easily), regular loss of voice, and a sensation of lump in the throat.

What can you do?

- Voice rest – stop talking when you get home
- Body rest – relax, take steamy baths
- Steam inhalations to moisten the back of the throat and ease pain
- Gargle with boiled, cooled salty water to reduce pain and fight infection
- Hydrate by drinking lots of water (1.5 litres/day)
- Early nights
- Take time off to allow inflammation or swelling of the vocal folds to subside.

