CANADIAN VOICE CARE FOUNDATION
HOW TO GET THE BEST MILEAGE FROM YOUR VOICE: VOCAL HYGIENE

Do

• Do drink plenty of water.

• Do swallow slowly.

• Do relax your throat, by doing abdominal breathing.

• Do vocal warm-ups prior to speaking, lecturing or singing and use vocal exercises afterward to bring voice back to a relaxed state.

• Do allow the breath to replace itself naturally.

• Do be aware and allow natural expansion/release in lower torso abdomen, back and sides during the breathing cycle.

• Do speak slowly, pausing often at natural boundaries to allow the breath to be replaced before continuing.

• Do wait until your breathing pattern can accommodate optimal voice production.

• Do be aware of the effects of emotions have on you, especially if it causes muscle tension in your neck, throat, jaw or chest.

Don't

• Don't drink or eat caffeine products, chocolate, milk products, nuts or popcorn before performing, don't smoke or drink alcohol excessively.

• Don't eat just prior to performing (3 hours).

• Don't clear your throat or cough habitually.

• Don't speak, sing or lecture without warming up and don't just stop at the end of a performance without cool down exercises.

• Don't raise shoulders or tighten neck and throat while breathing.

• Don't hold your breath or squeeze or push the voice out.

• Don't speak beyond a natural breath cycle or squeeze out the last few words of a thought without sufficient breath.

• Don't yell or speak extensively during strenuous exercise.

• Don't do prolonged, loud and vocally aggressive laughing or crying.
• **Do** initiate voice gradually on the outflowing breath, as on a sigh - aahhh.

• **Don’t** initiate voice with a harsh or sudden glottal attack.

• **Do** allow registers to change as pitch rises and drops, consult a singing teacher to assist with smooth register changes.

• **Don’t** speak in a low monotone or allow pitch vocal energy to drop so low that the sound becomes gravelly (glottal fry).

• **Do** keep the voice at a comfortable pitch.

• **Don’t** force your voice in a register beyond comfortable pitch.

• **Do** keep your keep your upper and lower teeth separated allowing the jaw to remain passive and flowing as you speak.

• **Don’t** ever clench your teeth or hold your jaw tense.

• **Do** whistle, clap, blow a horn or ring a bell to attract attention in a noisy environment.

• **Don’t** yell, cheer or scream. Note: "Lombard effect": a tendency to speak more loudly in the presence of background noise.

• **Do** learn to project your voice through proper conduction of breath.

• **Don’t** use your voice in noisy automobiles, planes, trains etc.

• **Do** position yourself as close as possible, and always face the person you are speaking with.

• **Don’t** out-talk or out-sing environmental noise.

• **Do** use a microphone for public speaking, practice microphone techniques to keep your voice relaxed and at a comfortable level.

• **Don’t** try to lecture or speak to a large audience without the aid of a microphone.

• **Do** speak softly in a natural pitch.

• **Don’t** ever whisper.

• **Do** allow for several periods of voice rest during the day, especially when ill or tired.

• **Don’t** use your voice extensively when you have a cold.

• **Do** learn to recognize the first signs of vocal fatigue (hoarseness, dry throat, tension, and poor vocal projection).

• **Don’t** use your voice when it feels strained.
• **Do** consult with your doctor when you experience throat discomfort or hoarseness for more than six days.

• **Don't** ignore prolonged symptoms of vocal strain, hoarseness, pain, fullness, heartburn or allergies.

• **Do** maintain proper humidity, both inside and outside your body.

• **Don't** expose your voice to extensive pollution, cigarette smoke or chemical fumes.

• **Do** avoid self-medication.

• **Don't** use aspirin or similar medication. It has a tendency to cause bleeding and predisposes the voice user to vocal fold hemorrhage, especially when used for menstrual cramping.