

## Looking after your voice

### Advice for head and neck patients

#### How should I look after my voice?

You should:

- drink plenty of liquid (but not tea, coffee, alcohol or caffeinated soft drinks). Aim for 8-10 drinks per day
- get enough sleep, as being tired will affect your voice in the same way that it would affect any muscular performance
- eat regular meals and try to eat a balanced, healthy diet
- avoid getting a dry mouth or throat. Chew sugar free gum if necessary.

#### Is there anything I should avoid?

Try to avoid:

- irritants such as tobacco, smoky places, alcohol, spicy foods, and dusty atmospheres
- eating late at night as this encourages indigestion, which will affect your voice
- using medicated lozenges. Any numbing effect of these may allow you to do more damage and menthol has a drying effect.
- a dry environment at home. Central heating dries the atmosphere, causing a particular problem if left on overnight while you are sleeping. To maintain some humidity in your room, put a bowl of water on or under the radiator. Alternatively, put a damp towel on the radiator.

continued overleaf

#### What if I have an acute infection?

If you have an acute infection such as a sore throat or laryngitis:

- increase your daily fluid intake
- use steam inhalations twice a day:
- boil a kettle of water and fill a bowl. Allow the water to cool a little so you do not burn yourself. Lean over the bowl and place a towel over your head and the bowl. Inhale the steam. Do not add any oils or vapours to the water
- rest your voice or use it very gently. Do not try to whisper; talk normally but gently
- avoid excessive coughing and throat clearing. Drink water or try swallowing to ease the irritation of a tickly cough.

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