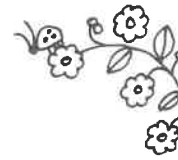




How To Keep Your Child's Voice Healthy



A child who yells, screams, talks in a noisy environment, or does an excessive amount of crying, laughing, singing, cheering, coughing, throat clearing, or loud talking, may be risking the health of his or her voice. These misuses or abuses of voice often cause hoarseness in children. Continuous vocal abuse may lead to swelling and thickening of the vocal folds, which in turn may lead to vocal nodules (callous-like growths on the vocal folds). The child's voice may become hoarse, breathy, or lower in pitch. Hoarseness in children may also be due to medical conditions such as allergies, sinus infections, or colds. If your child is hoarse for more than 10 days but shows no other signs of allergies or upper respiratory infection, take your child to a medical doctor. If the cause is vocal abuse, voice therapy may be necessary following any medical treatment. Therapy is aimed at identifying the child's behavioral habits that contributed to the nodules, and then reducing or eliminating them. Vocal nodules can be prevented by practicing healthy voice habits.

To help prevent voice problems, your child should . . .

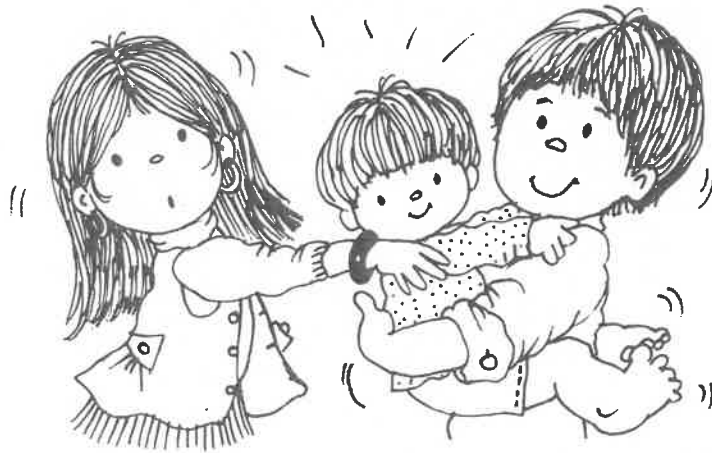
- reduce the amount of talking, especially in a noisy environment
- turn down the volume on televisions, radios, and computer games to create a quieter environment
- stop yelling and screaming; use nonverbal methods to get attention or to show excitement (for example, at sporting events substitute clapping or using a noisemaker for cheering; train the dog to come with a clap of the hands instead of yelling)
- move close to another person before talking
- rest the voice throughout the day
- avoid using the voice to make special effects noises, as children often do when playing with toy vehicles
- stay away from cigarette smoke
- relax the muscles in the neck, face, and shoulders
- avoid excessive talking, singing, coughing, or throat clearing, especially during episodes of upper respiratory infection or allergies



As a parent, should . . .



- Look for evidence of straining or effortful speaking, such as neck muscles that bulge, and immediately suggest a quieter volume
- Try to be a good voice model for your child; use a calm, comfortable pitch and loudness level
- Provide a healthy diet and encourage your child to drink plenty of water
- Set up a calm, quiet, restful environment, especially when the child is experiencing hoarseness
- Eliminate the sources of background noise so your child does not have to speak loudly to be heard
- Tell your child you can only "hear" when he or she uses a quiet "indoor" voice, and then respond only after he or she speaks in a quiet voice
- Teach the child to find quieter ways to get someone's attention (for example, by moving closer to someone before talking, or tapping someone on the shoulder rather than shouting)
- Ask the child to use the quietest voice that can still be heard without whispering



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