April 16 is World Voice Day!

**DID YOU KNOW?**

An estimated 17.9 million adults in the U.S. report problems with their voice. Many people use their voices for their work. Singers, lawyers, teachers, journalists, sales people, and public speakers are those at greatest risk for voice injury.

Taking care of your voice can help you avoid voice problems and disorders.

**The National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) supports research on the causes and conditions that can harm the voice and to test new ways to diagnose or treat voice disorders.**

**What causes voice problems?**

- Upper respiratory infections
- Acid reflux, heartburn, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), or laryngopharyngeal reflux (LPR)
- Vocal misuse and overuse
- Growths on the vocal folds
- Cancer of the larynx
- Neurological diseases
- Psychological trauma or stress

You may have a voice problem if you answer “yes” to any of these questions:

- Has your voice become hoarse or raspy?
- Have you lost your ability to hit some high notes when singing?
- Does your voice suddenly sound deeper?
- Does your throat often feel raw, achy, or strained?
- Has it become an effort to talk?
- Do you find yourself repeatedly clearing your throat?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, you may want to talk to your health care provider.

**Tips To Prevent Voice Problems**

- Maintain a healthy weight and avoid smoking.
- Exercise regularly and get enough rest.
- Stay hydrated: Drink 6 to 8 glasses of water a day.
- Use a saltwater solution if you choose to gargle.
- Use a humidifier in your home during winter or if the air indoors is very dry—30% humidity is recommended.
- Limit your intake of alcohol or caffeine and medications that dry out the vocal folds.
- Avoid mouthwash containing alcohol or irritating chemicals.
- Use your voice wisely and not to speak or sing when your voice is tired.
- Rest your voice when you need to.
- Avoid speaking or whispering.
- Practice good breathing techniques when singing or talking.
- Talk to your health care provider about ways to prevent heartburn, GERD, or LPR.
- Consider voice therapy with a speech-language pathologist to treat voice problems.

**Sources:**