

# DID YOU KNOW?

An estimated **17.9 million** adults in the U.S. report having a voice problem. Many people use their voices for their work. Teachers, telemarketers, singers, lawyers, broadcast journalists, sales people, and public speakers are among 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 to understand diseases and conditions that can harm the voice and to test new ways to diagnose or treat voice disorders.



NIDCD-funded research is exploring **how the brain controls the nerves and muscles** to produce the human voice. These findings may help the development of better treatments for voice disorders.



Researchers are investigating **how reflux from the stomach or esophagus to the throat** harms the vocal folds.



NIDCD-funded researchers are also looking at new ways to **assess vocal disorders and testing new methods of voice therapy.**

## 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.**



## Healthy Ways to Protect Your Voice



Maintain a healthy lifestyle and diet. Exercise regularly and get enough rest.



Drink plenty of water, especially when exercising.



Take vocal naps—give your voice a rest throughout the day.



Use a humidifier in your home during winter or if the air indoors is very dry—30% humidity is recommended.



If you drink caffeinated beverages or alcohol, balance your intake with plenty of water.



Don't smoke, and avoid second-hand smoke.



Use your voice wisely and try not to speak or sing when your voice is hoarse or tired.



Avoid cradling the phone to prevent muscle tension in your neck.



Rest your voice when you are sick. Avoid screaming or whispering.



Use a microphone, when necessary, in exhibit areas, classrooms, or exercise rooms.



Practice good breathing techniques when singing or talking.



Avoid talking in noisy places.



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.