

Vocal Health Tips

Dr. Martin Hopp, Ph.D., Otolaryngologist, is my voice guru. He is founder of the Tower Center for ENT and practices at the Cedar Sinai Medical Center in Beverly Hills, California. Known all over the world for his innovative ear surgery techniques, Dr. Hopp loves our art and wants us healthy. As physician to superstar singers, Dr. Hopp diagnoses and repairs the vocal damage and hearing injuries that plague pro musicians and singers. His rules for vocal maintenance and tips for touring will keep your voice in optimum condition. *This interview is excerpted from Singing For A Living / singingforaliving.com*

Dr. Hopp's Rules for Vocal Maintenance

- Your singing voice is an extension of your speaking voice.
- If you abuse your voice speaking, your singing will be affected.
- Get a lot of sleep, drink plenty of water, and participate in exercise.
- Rest, moisture, and muscle tone are the three key ingredients to good vocal health.
- Going in and out of changing climates (cold/dry/warm) irritates vocal cords.
- Smoke is the biggest enemy. It dries and irritates the throat.
- Alcohol dries the throat. It is a major enemy to the voice.
- Talking while smoking is very damaging.
- Caffeine is a drying agent. Avoid it or limit your intake.
- Never yell or scream in conversation, especially in dry climates.

Moisture is the key to maintaining healthy vocal cords.

- Use a vaporizer when living in dry climates, every day.
- Drink plain water to keep your vocal cords moist.
- The cords need to be hydrated from absorption through your system.
- There are no sprays or potions that help the voice more than consuming a lot of water.
- Sip water on breaks when singing.
- Water dilutes & flushes mucous in the throat so it won't collect on the vocal cords.
- Place a vaporizer about two feet away from your nose when you sleep.
- Cool mist vaporizer is better than hot mist because it does not promote bacteria growth.
- Don't put oils and fragrances or additives in the vaporizer- never eucalyptus – which dry out the voice.
- For dry throat, use glycerin based lozenges such as Grether's Black Currant Pastilles or Pine Brothers Honey.

Dr. Hopp's Tips for Touring

- Don't sing while flying on an airplane, and keep your talking to a minimum. The background noise is 30 to 60 decibels. It is an extremely loud environment. You will fatigue your voice speaking over the noise.
- The humidity on an airplane might drop as low as 3%! Drink one glass of water per hour on the plane, and don't sing the same day you fly.
- Go straight to the hotel after getting off the plane and take a 20-minute steam shower.
- Call ahead to hotel and ask concierge put a vaporizer in your room so it's running when you arrive.
- Use vaporizers—warm or cool mist—at hotels where the recycled air is also very dry. Use only plain water in the vaporizer, no additives or fragrances.
- Use saline nasal spray, such as AYR or OCEAN, to keep membranes moist.