

Reduce the amount of talking.

Total silence is impossible! But if your child is sounding hoarse when they get back from school, you could suggest quiet games and activities where talking is not necessary - try things like reading, drawing or playing on the computer.



Be a good model. Try to keep your own voice at a comfortable pitch and loudness. Try not to shout too often! Remind everyone in the family that they can help as well - take turns at talking rather than all shouting together to get attention!

Reward good habits.

Give your child lots of praise for trying to break those old habits.

Keep a star chart (for the whole family) and perhaps give a small reward at the end of each week.



Speech and Language Therapy Service

Helping to Protect Your Child's Voice



Why is voice care important?

Our voice box (larynx) is vulnerable to wear and tear. Children's vocal cords are particularly delicate. They vibrate together every time a child talks, shouts, laughs, coughs and makes other noises. When young children talk, their vocal cords vibrate together about 300 times a second. If the vibration is forced or strained then the effect on the vocal cords is like the effect on your hands if you were to clap them together continuously. Eventually your hands would become very sore and red. They might also feel tired and even swell up. If the voice is not rested, or it has been strained or used for a long time, it will be impossible for the redness and swelling to settle down. The sound of the voice may change.

Identify bad habits

Make a list of all the times when you can hear the following:

- Shouting, screaming or cheering
- Speaking with too much force
- Talking too much
- Constant throat clearing or coughing
- Singing along to music
- Calling from room to room
- Straining the voice to make noises like cars, sirens etc.
- Speaking too loudly
- Speaking with too high or low pitch
- Speaking over background noise, like TV
- Whispering



Discourage the use of loud or effortful speaking

- Remind your child to use a softer, easier voice - but not whispering as this can also be harmful.
- Work out a signal to remind them.
- Put a reminder sign on their bedroom door.
- Use your own judgement to give these reminders - too often can cause frustration for everyone involved.

The environment can also affect your child's voice.

Smoke, dust and even the central heating can irritate your child's throat, and so can sucking lots of cough sweets.

Make sure your child drinks lots of water.

Discourage making non-speech sounds.

Children often make pretend sounds when they are playing - like cars, trains and planes. Explain to them that these all hurt their voice.

Suggest other sounds instead - try making a "shhhhh" sound instead of a high-pitched screech.

Frequent throat clearing can often be reduced by drawing your child's attention to it. Take sips of water instead or give them some chewing gum.

Suggest alternatives for voice

If your child is going somewhere where shouting is likely (like a sports match or cubs / scouts) suggest a noisemaker - perhaps a whistle or shaker - as a substitute for shouting.

Don't talk over background noise.

You can help by turning down the volume on the TV or radio when you are talking. Have some quiet times during the day when there is no background noise.

