

## VOCAL HEALTH IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

**Vocal Hygiene** is a daily regimen of good vocal practices and habits that will help you use your best voice in all situations. The pandemic of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) has forced health accommodations in the classroom and laboratories at BGSU. Here are suggestions for keeping your voice healthy. If you have any voice and speech problems, please contact the Speech and Hearing Clinic at BGSU (419 372 2515).

### Tips For Keeping Your Voice Healthy:

- Face coverings reduce the loudness of your voice and speech, and distorts some sounds.\*
  - Use clear speech (make each sound clearly without being too loud).
  - Use a microphone-amplification system so that you do not have to speak loudly.
  - Reduce background noise so that you will be heard more easily.
  - Wear a transparent face mask if possible so students can see your lips.
  - Use gestures (hand gestures, facial gestures) when they might be helpful.
- Hydrate your voice: drink 32-64 ounces of water per day.
- Increase water intake during and after teaching, exercise, or air travel, and in warm weather.
- Use a humidifier in dry climates.
- Limit caffeine intake (caffeine dehydrates): if you have a caffeinated drink, follow up with the same amount of water.
- Limit alcohol intake (alcohol dehydrates).
- Many medications also dehydrate (antihistamines, Excedrin and Anacin, etc.).
- Limit exposure to irritants (chemicals, fumes, etc.).
- Avoid competing with background noise when talking and/or singing (TV, music, etc.).
- Avoid throat clearing and coughing: use silent throat clearing, hard swallows, sips of water, etc.
- Use good breath support for speaking and singing: use warm ups before making any demands on your voice – don't push from your throat.
- Use good posture when speaking and singing: be aware of your whole body with special awareness of your head, neck, jaw, lips.
- Do not overuse your voice: shouting, screaming, loud laughter can be damaging. When your voice becomes fatigued, REST it!
- Use gentle voice onsets.
- Practice good nutritional habits.
- Know voice danger signals: hoarseness for more than 10-14 days, vocal fatigue/pain, changes in vocal quality-----see your doctor.

Presented by:

Donna Colcord, M.S., CCC-SLP

Ronald Scherer, Ph.D.

Communication Sciences and Disorders Dept. August 31, 2020

\*Baltimore & Atcherson, "Helping Our Clients Parse Speech Through Masks During COVID-19", The ASHA Leader, June/July, 2020, p. 35.