

What's all the talk about?

Celebrate and Educate! May is Better Speech and Hearing Month

Let's talk about

Voice

How do we produce voice?

Air from our lungs is pushed through closed vocal folds causing them to vibrate (vocal folds are open at rest). This air is then sent through the resonating cavities of the pharynx (throat), mouth, and/or nose. Voices are different as the size, shape and quality of each speaker's vocal folds and resonating cavities are unique.

Vocal abuse; what is it and who is most likely to have it?

Vocal abuse is any misuse of the larynx (voice box). Teachers, lawyers, singers and anyone else whose profession requires them to use their voice often and in 'speaker' type fashion is at risk for vocal fold pathologies. Other causes of vocal fold abuse include: frequent throat clearing, allergies, reduced liquid intake, and other diagnoses/diseases which affect bone and muscle function. Moreover, physical and cognitive diseases can affect vocal production as well (since effective voice use requires mental and physical capabilities).

What steps can you take to decrease the likelihood of vocal abuse?

Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water. The vocal folds are mucous membranes that require adequate hydration for optimal performance. For younger children, teach them to imitate environmental noises in the front of the mouth and not to use 'throaty' noises (e.g. the car noise made with the lip trill or 'vroom' is easier on the vocal folds than the harsh 'errrrrrrr' or crashing noises which place strain on the vocal folds).

As always, consult with a Speech Language Pathologist if any signs or symptoms of vocal abuse are observed.