

Emerald Choral Academy

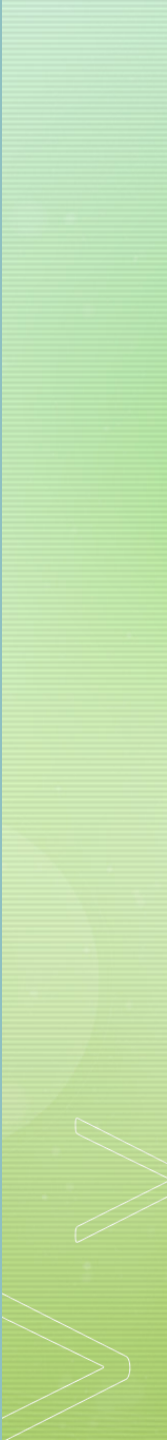
# Everyday Vocal Health

J. Scott Kovacs



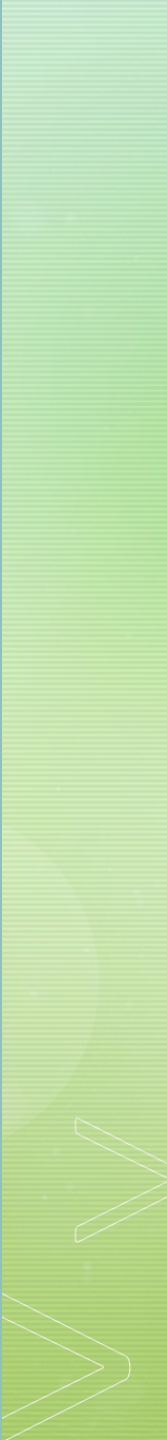


# Disclaimer

- All the information in this presentation is intended to be informational. It is not intended for the purpose of diagnosing or treating medical disorders. The Emerald Choral Academy is not responsible for conditions that require a licensed professional for diagnosis or treatment. If you are experiencing symptoms that might require a diagnosis, seek medical attention.
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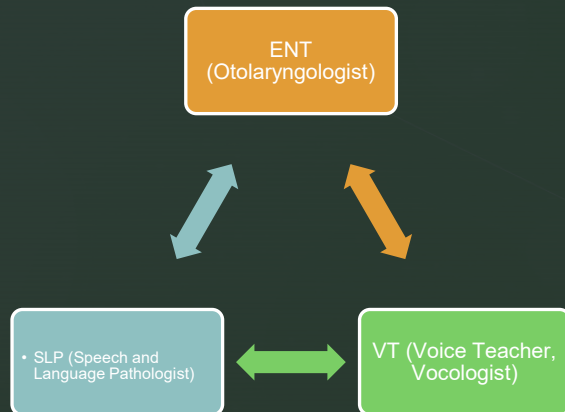
# Introduction

- Vocal Pedagogy: Physics, Physiology, Psychology (& Neurology or “NeuroPed”)
  - NOT covering major vocal disorders (ex. Laryngitis)
  - Avoiding most “lingo,” but please ask
  - You are your own best expert
  - Recommendations and guidelines, not rules
  - Nothing replaces a relationship with your medical professionals (not even Google)
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# Vocal Health & Voice Professionals

**ENT: *Ear, Nose and Throat doctor.***

This specialty deals with conditions of the head and neck, including the voice. (Laryngologists are specialists.) Tell them you sing!



**SLP: *Speech and Language Pathologist***

An SLP is a clinician that can assess, diagnose, and treat speech, language, social communication, cognitive communication, and swallowing disorders.

**VT: *Voice Teacher***

A professional trained in teaching vocal pedagogy, repertoire, and technique.

## ▶ When to seek professional help

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When it hurts (sharp pain, dull pain)

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When it persists (it just won't get better or go away)

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Sudden changes to the voice (loss of range)

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When its unpredictable (can't quite count on the voice)

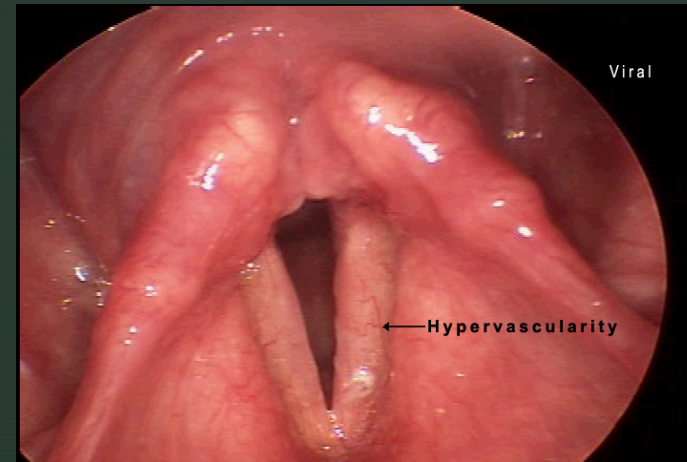
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If you can't enjoy singing anymore

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Any time you *\*think\** you need medical attention

# Healthy vs. Unhealthy Folds



# Warm-ups and cool downs

- Glides and slides, highs and lows
- Stretch and unpress (Ingo Titze)
- Straw phonation and bubble phonation
- Start and end gently
- Can I warm up in the car?
- How much warming up/cooling down do I need?

# “Vocal Load”

- What do we mean when we say “vocal load?”
  - Volume, Pitch, Time, Repetition
- Why does my voice get tired (fatigued)?
- Job, Rehearsal, Performance, “Zoom Boom”
- High and loud for too long
- The Brass Ring: Vocal Efficiency (Vibrancy, Resonance, Flow)



# Vocal Rest

- Sleep is your best help, best defense, best healing
- The myth of total vocal rest (and only on the advice of...)
  - Tissues heal in a specific “direction” and need use to orient (think PT)
- Don’t skip warmups or cooldowns
- Use SOVT
- On whispering:

**Whispering can alter the manner in which your vocal folds come together**, often compressing the vocal folds in the middle where your tissue is most likely to swell when you are sick. Whenever you have a sore throat, you should minimize your voice use if possible. If you are uncertain whether you are safe to use your voice, it is always best to see an otolaryngologist who specializes in voice care."

*National Center for Voice & Speech*

# Vocal Rest, cont.

- Try “Dry Practicing” (Voice Science Works)
  - Each inhale and vowel shape preparation for the beginning of each phrase
  - Mouthing or speaking lyrics with connection and inflection
  - Higher phrases an octave down or in lower keys
  - Choreography and staging
  - Memorization work
  - Playing melody lines on the piano while thinking the text
  - Singing each phrase through a straw

# Hydration

- “Pee Clear” (straw colored urine)
- Takes 15 – 20 minutes for water to be absorbed. Longer to reach tissues
- Vocal mechanism dehydrates with use
- We exhale water as a byproduct of respiration
- Lemon- increases salivary flow
- Herbal teas (some cause reflux/GI reaction)
- Pedialyte

# Nutrition

- The myth about dairy (except maybe for you)
- Alcohol and caffeine intake
- Food sensitivities
- Carbs or protein when you sing?
- “Diets” and the voice (talk to your medical professional)
- Soda, carbonated beverages, juices

# Hoarseness and Laryngitis

- Vocal fold swelling or inflammation
  - Chemical, Mechanical, or Thermal (!)
- GERD/Laryngeal Reflux (needs Dx, not as common AYT)
- Cold, Flu, Post-nasal drip,
- Treatment for major illnesses

# Environment

- Dust and Pollen
  - Neti Pot, Saline Sprays, Pollen Tracker, Humidifier
  - Medications (consult your Dr.)
- Ambient Noise
- Singing to recordings/in the car
- Chemical Irritants

# Habits

- Throat clearing
- TENSION IS THE ENEMY OF GOOD SINGING
  - Tongue tension, body, face, foot pain
- Build vocal efficiency then forget your technique
- Know your food sensitivities
- Make substitutions
- Exercise (your body is your instrument)


# Singing with a mask

- No known increase in voice disorders (Nguyen, et al)
- Reduction in certain frequencies depending on materials (affects perceived vibrancy) (Fantini, et al)
- Tendency to over sing
- Can actually improve efficiency through inertance (think SOVT)
- Change after every 60 minutes of singing, let dry thoroughly or wash
- Results in healthier choirs in many ways!



# Sources

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- Nguyen, D.D., McCabe, P., Thomas, D. *et al. Acoustic voice characteristics with and without wearing a facemask. Sci Rep* **11**, 5651 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-021-85130-8>
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- <https://www.voicescienceworks.org/vocal-health.html>
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Now for your questions...  
...and maybe some videos!

