

## **VOCAL HEALTH - THE ROLE OF HYDRATION- PART 2**

### **Vocal Dehydrators**

Here's a list of some known vocal dehydrators

- Caffeine in coffee, cocoa, chocolates, colas and to a lesser extent in tea
- Alcohol
- Dry and polluted, airconditioned, air heated and air filtered environments
- Sugar/ sweets/ lozenges
- Mouth breathing- habitual or due to a blocked nose
- Medications like anti histamines[ used for colds], cough syrups, diuretics, antidepressants, anxiolytics, anti hypertensives, very high doses of vitamin C, etc.

### **How much water is considered adequate for a healthy voice?**

The International Sports Medicine Institute recommends one-half ounce of water per pound of body weight [ ref- Broadcast Voice Handbook by Dr. Ann Utterback].

Here are a few simple ways to keep yourself hydrated and ensure that you drink water however busy you are, wherever you are [ this is applicable to everybody unless you have a specific renal or cardiac problem, warranting restriction of water intake]

- Consume at least 2 liters [more if you are a professional voice user/performer]. Don't wait till you are thirsty because thirst is a sign of dehydration.
- Eat fruits which have a high water content. They will also give you the bonus of fiber, vitamins and minerals
- Reduce your consumption of coffee, colas, alcohol and other vocal dehydrators mentioned above. For every cup/unit of coffee, cola, alcohol you consume, drink an extra glass or two of water.

- If you live/work in an air conditioned or heated home/office/newsroom, live or work around smoke and fumes or under hot lights in a theater or studio, drink extra water.
- Keep water handy at all times. Always carry a bottle of water with you. Have a bottle or two at your work desk.
- Drink water every time you think of it.
- Start your day with a glass or two of water.
- The color of your urine is an indicator of how well hydrated your body and the vocal folds are. The paler, the better.
- Air travel dehydrates the vocal folds. Keep your talking in the airplane to an absolute minimum and overhydrate yourself.
- Drink a few extra glasses of water for 3- 4 days before a performance, presentation or a heavy rehearsal
- Drink more water if you exercise
- Get yourself treated if you are a mouth breather

### **Warm or cold?**

The key issue is to drink water whichever way you like it. If cold water does not affect your throat in any way, I see no reason for you to stop drinking it. However, I have found in my clinical practice that drinking cold water in a hot environment or hot water in a cold room/studio tends to affect the throat possibly through vasodilatation or vasoconstriction. Listen to the wisdom of your own body and do what suits your body. Drinking cold or iced water just before or during a performance may constrict the throat muscles. Water at room temperature, during a performance/presentation is a safe bet.