

School News & Notes

Teachers: Take Care of Your Voice

(NAPSA)—It's a lesson worth learning: Teachers who try to do the best possible job for their students need to take care and preserve what may be their most valuable teaching asset—their voice.

Teachers are among those professionals who make great demands on their voices; they talk all day long in the classroom and have to project loud enough so that all their students can hear them clearly. Unfortunately, this stress on the voice can lead to health problems.

Some 7.5 million people have diseases or disorders of the voice, reports the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD), which supports research into the nature, causes, diagnosis, and prevention of voice disorders. In addition to overuse of the vocal cords, other causes of voice problems include upper respiratory infections, vocal nodules or other growths, laryngeal cancer, and more. Fortunately, most of these disorders can be successfully treated or avoided.

Whether you're a teacher or not, try taking the following quiz:

- Has your voice become hoarse or raspy?
- Have you lost your ability to hit some high notes when singing?
- Does your voice suddenly sound deeper?
- Does your throat often feel raw, achy, or strained?
- Has it become an effort to talk?
- Do you find yourself repeatedly clearing your throat?

If you answer "yes" to any of



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these questions, you may be experiencing a voice problem and should consult an otolaryngologist, the physician and surgeon who specializes in ear, nose, and throat disorders. He or she can determine the underlying cause of your voice problem.

You may also need to see a speech-language pathologist. He or she can help you with improving the use of your voice and avoiding vocal abuse. A speech-language pathologist can provide a good education on the healthy use of the voice and instruction in proper voice techniques. Teachers, for example, may want to use a lightweight microphone and an amplifier-speaker system to reduce vocal strain.

The result: Healthier teachers who can be better instructors for our nation's students. To learn more about voice disorders, visit www.nidcd.nih.gov, or call toll-free 1-800-241-1044.