

VOICE LESSON #1

Vocal Health for Cantors: How to care for your voice.

I) The Do's: As a singer (cantor) your instrument is your body, so it is vital that you keep yourself in the best health possible.

1. Treat allergies and infections promptly and rest your voice when ill. Drink plenty of water during the day to keep your body hydrated and voice lubricated (8 - 9 pints recommended per day).
2. Keep a bottle of water nearby on Sunday (but be discreet in its handling). For cantors, sipping water as you sing does not violate the Church's fasting requirements before receiving Holy Communion as long as it is plain water - no flavoring of any kind.
3. Be sure that you rise on Sunday morning at least 2 hours before singing. Spend the time in the car gently warming-up your voice.
4. While singing, be sure that you are taking in enough air to support the voice. When you have a chance to breathe, make it count. (The principals of good breathing are covered in Lesson # 4.)

II) The Don'ts: Things one must avoid to keep the voice in good shape.

1. Orange or citrus juice and caffeinated drinks - can affect your throat's lubrication. For every cup of morning coffee, tea, or juice, you must drink an 8 oz. glass of water to counter its drying effects.
2. Milk & other dairy products - furs up the throat. Avoid drinking anything with milk or cream prior to singing.
3. Eating heavy meals prior to singing - the food doesn't have time to digest and sits heavily in your stomach. This makes it harder to control breathing, vocal reach and projection. Also, remember that the Church requires a minimum of one hour of fasting before receiving Communion, so you should plan meals accordingly.
4. Smoking and smoke-filled environments, period. Avoid tobacco like the plague!
5. Aspirin - can contribute to tinnitus and vocal cord hemorrhage.
6. Excessive loud talking and yelling - can lead to vocal strain.
7. Coughing and clearing your throat - swallow or sip water instead.

8. Alcohol - Although a small drink may help to relax you, too much alcohol may numb the cords and will cause lack of control (vocally & otherwise!). Not usually something that one need worry about on Sunday morning (at least we hope so), but we include it anyway.