

How to manage effects of COLDS and Upper Respiratory Tract infections (URTIs) on your voice

Principles of intervention are to:

1. **Decongest** (decrease the swelling of the glands and mucosal lining of the vocal tract)
2. **Humidify** (clear secretions, improve nasal airway & decrease coughing).

Many over the counter medications work but they may also have significant drying effects so use with caution. As hard as it is, not taking medications and doing very little is often preferable for a speedy recovery.

Avoid:

- Performing if coughing persistently or if the voice is inconsistent in quality and/or your pitch range is compromised
- those medications that state '**drying**' effects as they will tend to make your secretions more tenacious (sticky) and difficult to clear.
- some antihistamines if known to cause drying.
- **Aspirin** for 8-10 days before performing as these can increase the risk of a vocal haemorrhage. Use paracetamol for pain relief instead or even codeine if necessary (*e.g. panadeine*[®]).
- **Betadine** gargles and **menthol/eucalyptus** lozenges within 8 hours of performing as these are too drying and will make voicing difficult
- Dairy products if feeling 'sticky'
- Corticosteroid sprays unless you are regularly taking these as a preventer for asthma. It is not advisable to start these unless advised by your doctor and only for respiratory reasons - *i.e. not for your throat*

Do:

- **Humidify** air
- **Drink lots of water**, including mineral water
- Use medications that are pure **decongestants** in the short term including pseudoephedrine (*i.e. don't have additional ingredients*) if they don't interfere with your sleep nor make you feel anxious and 'jittery'. If they do, consider taking half a tablet or a long acting preparation in the morning and none at night.
- Take **Vitamin C** as a preventative measure but don't forget it is highly drying so combat with fluids and take early in the day.
- Use nasal sprays for short term relief. **Saline** nasal sprays can be effective. Nasal irrigation with **FLO**[®] or **FESS**[®] or similar sprays is better and can be administered 3-4 times per day with five squirts per nostril. Other 'over the counter' decongestant sprays can have a rebound effect, whereby you become more blocked, if taken repeatedly.

- Take a **mucolytic** preparation like **Bisolvon®**, **Robitussin®** or **Guafenesin®** if need to break down sticky mucous but make sure it is the mucolytic version not the drying preparation.
- **Rest** as much as possible. Most colds and flus are resolved within 5 days but will linger longer if the vocal tract is inflamed by heavy vocal demands. Certainly consider abstaining from singing for the first 48 hours of cold onset and for any times that the voice is deeper in pitch or breaking during sustained phonation.

Remember:

- **When in doubt please consult a medical doctor and let them know you are a performer with special vocal needs. If concerned about your voice and whether you are fit to perform with a cold, please discuss with Company Management**