



As performers we must never forget that our bodies are our instruments. So, just as you would care for a violin, guitar, or any other instrument, you must be prepared to look after your body. If you fail to look after your body, you will not perform to the best of your ability and you may not be offered the opportunities you deserve. Here are some tips to help you maintain your vocal strength and stamina in the performing arts.

It's the most obvious solution to maintaining your vocal health, but you'd be amazed at the number of performers who forget that screaming and shouting will seriously damage your voice. There will be times when you're not thinking about the development of your performing arts skills and 'looking after your instrument' but if you're serious about success on the stage, you will need to constantly remind yourself that screaming, shouting, or straining the voice in anyway will be detrimental to your performance. A voice can be stretched but not pushed and quite often you will need to stretch muscles involved with the vocal process as part of your training. This is just like an athlete stretching before running a race. However, we know that if the athlete feels like he's pulling a muscle, he will stop to prevent any damage being caused. The same is true for singers and actors in the

actors before going on stage. For our best vocal performance, our voices need to be warmed-up with an effective sequence of vocal exercises. So, get into the habit of doing vocal warm-ups before going on stage and your performance will benefit greatly.

Singers and actors worldwide talk about weird and wonderful concoctions and lifestyle rules that help them look after their voices. Whilst some of these may help you to maintain vocal health, a few solid rules are sure to make a difference.

- When you wake up in the morning, spit out any phlegm and drink 8 ounces of water.

- Avoid extremely hot and extremely cold drinks

- Be aware that excessive dairy products like milk, cream, and chocolate are not good for the voice

- Eat well and get plenty of vitamins and minerals to stay healthy

- If you've strained your voice, mixtures such as milk and honey will help you feel better but not necessary prepare you to sing

- If you're preparing to sing, drink plenty of water or other drinks such as lemon and ginger to clean and lubricate the vocal tract

In a randomized study published in *The American Journal of Preventive Medicine* in 2005, researchers recruited almost 400 healthy volunteers and followed them for 60 days during cold and flu season. Some of the subjects were told to gargle three times a day. At the end of the study period, the group that regularly gargled had a nearly ^{compared with the control group, and when they did} get sick, "gargling tended to attenuate bronchial symptoms," the researchers wrote.



