

# Let's Take Care of Our Voices

by Linda Mawhinney &  
Mary Scott McTeague



We have two vocal cords in our larynx or voice box. When we talk the cords vibrate together. When we cry, scream, or make harsh noises, the cords can develop swelling at the points where they touch. Over time this swelling can become nodules (growths) on the vocal cords. When the vocal cords are swollen, or nodules are forming, the voice is usually hoarse and breathy. If children are abusing their vocal cords, you may find that their voice is weaker or more hoarse later in the day. If your child experiences a consistently hoarse voice, you need to consult with an ear, nose, and throat doctor. The following is a list of suggestions for maintaining a healthy voice:

- No yelling or screaming. Instead of yelling, think of another way to express anger, such as kicking a soccer ball or punching a pillow.
- Talk in a quiet voice. Give it a name such as "easy voice" so family members can easily remind you to use it. Eliminate background noise if it makes the child talk louder.
- No harsh "sound effects" such as motor noises, animal growls, or monster voices.
- Don't talk to people from far away or from another room. Get close. Instead of calling a person with your voice, blow a whistle or horn.
- Smoke, fumes, or pollen can irritate the vocal cords. Avoid any drinks or foods with caffeine which can also irritate vocal cords.
- Singing is OK if it is not too loud and you are not straining to hit very high or very low notes.
- A soft, quiet voice is better than a whisper. Whispering can strain the vocal cords because of the energy it takes to whisper loud enough to be heard.