

## **VOCAL ARTS MEDICINE: A NEW CONCEPT IN VOICE CARE FOR VOCAL PERFORMERS**

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'Vocal Arts Medicine or Care of the Professional Voice' has emerged as an important, specialised area of medicine to help singers, actors, radio and television hosts and other vocal performers achieve the full potential of their voice without straining or damaging it.

Voice clinics and voice medicine centers have developed in the U.S, Europe and recently in India to provide a sophisticated level of voice care. They not only provide 'state of the art' facilities for diagnosis and treatment of voice disorders but also provide scientific voice training for enhancing and maintaining the quality, range, power, stamina and flexibility of the voice. Each voice is unique and voice specialists take this uniqueness into consideration before training a voice. The voice is analyzed on a computer and the vocal cord movements are minutely examined with specialized instruments like the laryngeal telescope and the fiberoptic laryngoscope, before a voice enhancement program is designed for the individual. With modern technology, we can actually watch the vocal system in action to see how it is performing and where it is going wrong. Therefore voice problems can be detected early and treated effectively. There has been a simultaneous revolution in treatment techniques – comprehensive voice therapy programs, botox and fat injections, newer microscopic surgical techniques which allow precise treatment of the delicate tissues of the voice box

The great silent film star John Gilbert lost his career after his first sound film because of his high pitched feminine voice. In the U.S working on enhancement of the voice is considered a vital part of an image building exercise, not only for performers but for all communication professionals. The voice can be enhanced, contrary to the popular belief that you are born with your voice. If you have a high pitched, shrill, weak, nasal or hoarse voice it is possible to correct it.

In order to convey to the audience everything a performer is feeling and thinking, the voice should have a developed range, power and expressiveness. It should be powerful and strong or personal and intimate when required. Scientific vocal training is aimed at freeing your natural or individual voice, while maintaining the long term health of the voice. It offers significant benefits in decreasing vocal fatigue and increasing vocal stamina and endurance. Scientific voice training trains you to relax physically, without reducing emotional intensity.

Performers create an impact on their audience through their body and voice. The same factors, which make them electric and exciting viz., a gregarious or emotional personality, high energy levels and the ability to convey a wide range of powerful emotions also make them susceptible to developing voice injuries and voice problems. Hectic schedules, erratic and long working hours in dry, dusty studios, extensive traveling, wrong eating habits, smoking, use of recreational drugs, post performance parties with excessive talking, fatigue, and intense physical and emotional stress

further aggravate the problem. These voice problems can be easily prevented by developing healthy vocal habits coupled with a healthy diet and lifestyle.

The voice is not just the two tiny vocal cords in the throat. The real vocal instrument is the entire body. The production of voice is a fine tuned, well orchestrated activity involving the optimum co-ordination of various systems ranging from the lungs and the larynx [voice box] to the jaw, throat, mouth and tongue. When all the parts are allowed to do their jobs without any restrictions or tensions, the result is an effective and expressive voice. Scientific voice training is designed to develop and enhance the harmonious interplay of these various systems. It teaches you to look at the way you use your body and breathing when you speak. Training is aimed at developing body and spinal alignment, physical ease and physical presence, full and free use of the jaw, lips, tongue and throat, pitch range and variety, projection, resonance, encouraging diaphragmatic abdominal breathing and coordinating the breath with the voice. It goes without saying that you need to make these exercises everyday practice.

A good voice is an indispensable part of our personality, but for performers and professional voice users it is the very focus of their existence. Most performers spend a lot of time and effort, developing their physical appearance. But the voice is one area that is often overlooked. Vocal fitness and a daily voice workout are as essential to the vocal artiste as daily physical exercise is to the athlete. The old adage 'Prevention is better than Cure' holds very true in the case of voice disorders.

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