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### VOCAL HYGIENE FOR COLD SEASON

1. **Hydrate.** Proper hydration is the most important thing you can do for vocal health. Your pee should be pale. If you want hard numbers, drink half your body weight in ounces of water. For example, a 120 lb. person should aim for 60 oz. a day. Also, avoid caffeine and alcohol, which will dry you out.
2. **Vitamin C.** It boosts your immune system and helps with cell repair. It can help prevent a cold, or if you have one, it may shorten the duration. I like Emergen-C, which is a supplemental vitamin drink mix. There is also a kids' formula.
3. **Guaifenesin.** If you feel you need an OTC cold medicine, get Mucinex. It will thin mucus secretions. However, you will need to drink a lot of water because it can dry you out.
3. **Steam.** This will help hydrate your nasal passages and thin mucus. You may want to invest in a personal steam inhaler. Vicks makes one that you can get at the drugstore or Amazon for about \$35. If your house is dry, a humidifier will help to keep your nasal passages generally hydrated, so a cold will be less likely to take hold.
4. **Gargle with a warm, saltwater mixture.** The water should be salty but not like the ocean – too much salt can dry you out. Try ½ tsp. sea salt, ½ tsp. baking soda, ½ tsp. clear corn syrup (honey or maple syrup), and 6 oz. of warm water. Gargle without vocalizing for 2 minutes.
5. **Don't clear your throat!** Throat clearing causes irritation and swelling, which in turn causes your body to produce even more phlegm. You need to be patient and sing it off. The vibrations of your vocal folds will gently remove the phlegm; slow and steady wins this race. If you *must* clear your throat, I will show you a safe way to do so.
6. **Neti pot.** This one takes some getting used to, but my neti pot has saved me from many colds. Always read the directions, sanitize properly, and use distilled water. Here is a good instructional video: <http://youtu.be/H9i6x6uGm2k>
7. **Tea and cough drops.** Look for licorice root and slippery elm. I prefer Yogi Tea's Throat Comfort to the popular Throat Coat because it tastes way better. Add some honey and lemon for soothing and extra vitamin C. Ricola cough drops are my favorite.

*Obviously, I am not a doctor. Some of these tips may not be appropriate for children. If you have a medical condition or concern, please consult your physician before trying these tips.*