

Protect your voice

For families. Vocal nodules and hoarseness in children.

Signs to watch for

- A raspy, hoarse or breathy voice that doesn't come back
- Voice worse in the evening and after sports
- Yells often or uses their voice a lot
- Runs out of air at the end of sentences, pushes with the throat

Play the "good voice" game

- Compare three voices: the shouting voice, the whispering voice and the **good voice**, the one that carries without strain.
- Say "Hi, my name is Leo" with each one, then keep the third through dinner.
- No yelling, no whispering, no talking too softly: all three strain the voice.

Breathe while you talk

- Stop to breathe at the end of an idea or at a comma.
- Don't finish sentences out of breath.

At home

- Move closer instead of yelling from room to room.
- Signals without the voice: a raised hand, two claps, a bell for meals.
- With siblings: one at a time.
- Go easy on the big monster voices.

At sports

- Cheer without yelling: clapping, noisemakers, cowbells.
- To the coach: "She's working on her voice with a speech-language pathologist. Could you encourage her to use a signal instead of yelling?"

Water and air

- A water bottle in the backpack.
- 45% to 50% humidity at home in winter; a scarf over the nose and mouth in extreme cold.
- Watch for mouth breathing.

When to see someone

- Hoarse for **more than 4 weeks**: see your doctor for an ENT exam.
- Sooner with pain, trouble swallowing or breathing, a lump in the neck, or blood.
- A speech-language pathologist can start during the wait (private, no referral).
- No need for total silence: short breaks help more.

Protect your voice at work

For teachers, daycare educators and coaches.

Signs to watch for

- Vocal fatigue by the end of the day
- Voice already lost a few times
- Feeling you must force to be heard
- Neck tension, hoarse and strained voice

In the classroom

- Ask for an **amplifier**: it has the strongest research support.
- Non-verbal signals: a bell, a tidy-up song, a gesture for quiet, the lights.
- Transition routines so you don't repeat instructions at the top of your voice.
- Move close to the children instead of talking across the room.

Breaks and breathing

- 5 to 10 minutes of silence, several times a day.
- At lunch: silence and water.
- A few calm breaths before class; shorter sentences; breathe at the pauses.

Noise

- Noise in daycare averages 56 to 71 dB, with peaks of 80 to 95 dB (CSQ).
- Acoustic panels cut noise by 6 to 7 dBA in Québec daycare centres (IRSST).

Winter

- 45% to 50% humidity at work and at home (CHUM).
- Keep water within reach, even when you're not thirsty.
- No yelling in the gym or at the rink: use a whistle and signals.

When to see someone

- Your voice is your work tool: consult **after 15 days** (Québec teachers' union guide).
- Your doctor requests the ENT exam; a speech-language pathologist can start in parallel.
- Work-related voice disorder: a CNESST claim is possible, with a medical certificate.
- Sudden change with weakness or facial drooping: call 911.

Sources: OOAQ (2026); CSQ guide on voice disorders (2021); CHUM voice-care sheet (2025); IRSST (2005); Roy et al. (2002, 2003). General information: this guide does not replace an assessment.