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When You Lose Your Voice...

According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), when a person experiences laryngitis or becomes hoarse, the vocal cords become swollen, thick, and can't produce sound. Continued vocal strain can lead to more serious disorders, such as persistent hoarseness, breathiness, inappropriate pitch (too high or low), or inappropriate volume (too loud or soft).

To protect your voice:

- ◆ Avoid shouting or screaming. If you feel strain or tension in your throat, neck, or shoulders, you're too loud.
- ◆ If you need to project your voice, be sure that you use abdominal breathing.
- ◆ Avoid constant throat-clearing, coughing, and loud talking.
- ◆ Rest your voice (don't whisper). Keep your throat moist by drinking plenty of water.
- ◆ Watch what you eat. Frequent heartburn and a sour taste in your mouth may mean stomach acids are spilling over into your larynx.
- ◆ Go easy on your voice when you have a cold. Seek medical attention for sinus infections and allergies.

Source: American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, www.asha.org

Protect Your Hearing this Summer

Summertime is here and with it comes increased exposure to loud, potentially damaging noise. Typical summertime activities such as watching a fireworks display, mowing the lawn, attending a rock concert, or riding a motorcycle produce dangerous noise levels that can damage your hearing.

According to researchers at the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), the following are signs that you may have hearing loss:

- You frequently complain that people mumble, speech isn't clear, or you hear only parts of conversations when people are talking.
- You often ask people to repeat what they said.
- Your friends or relatives tell you that you don't seem to hear very well.
- You don't laugh at jokes because you miss too much of the story.
- You need to ask others about the details of a meeting that you just attended.
- Others say that you play the TV or radio too loudly.
- You can't hear the doorbell or the telephone.
- You find that looking at people when they talk to you makes it somewhat easier to understand them, especially when you're in a noisy place or where there are competing conversations.

ASHA recommends protecting your hearing by avoiding excessively loud noises when possible. Here are several other precautions to remember:

- Alternate noisy activities with periods of quiet.
- Pump down the volume. When using



stereo headsets or listening to amplified music in confined places like a car, turn down the volume.

- Use earplugs, earmuffs, or other hearing protectors at work and home.
- Limit lengthy periods of loud noise exposure. Don't sit next to the speakers at concerts or auditoriums.
- Be a smart consumer. When buying appliances, recreational equipment, children's toys, and power tools, look for items with low noise levels.
- Don't be fooled by thinking your ears are "tough" or that you have the ability to "tune out" noise. If you think you've "gotten used to" noise you're routinely exposed to, then most likely you've already suffered damage and acquired a permanent hearing loss.
- Educate yourself about the damaging effects of noise and what you can do to prevent your exposure to noise. Have routine hearing checks with your doctor to monitor your hearing.

For more information, visit the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association at www.asha.org/public/hearing/disorders/noise.htm.