

It is never too early to begin to exercise your speech and voice system! Your voice remains strongest and most efficient when properly exercised. Your breathing is the power behind your voice. The air that you exhale causes the vocal folds to vibrate, which produces your voice. Your tongue and lips then shape the voice into the various sounds, syllables, and words of our language. The following exercises will keep all three systems in good shape.

Exercises to Keep Your Speech and Voice Strong

- □ Sit or stand tall and Inhale through your nose. Feel your ribs and belly expand as you fill your lungs with air.
- Continue to take several deep breaths from your diaphragm. (Your diaphragm is the large muscle located at the base of your lungs. Your abdominal muscles help move your diaphragm.)
- □ Exhale slowly though your mouth as if you are blowing out a candle.

Voice and Speech Production

- Take a deep breath and then push from your diaphragm as you say, "AH" for at least 15 seconds. Feel your voice fill the room. Now push from your diagphragm and say each sound listed below for 15 seconds each.
 "OH" "OO" "EE"
- Next take a deep breath and then slide up and down your pitch range by first saying "OH" and then "EE." (Pitch refers to how high or low the sound is; for example, birds usually chirp at a very high pitch.) Continue to alternate between these two sounds for 30 seconds.
- □ Let's work a little bit more on volume. Take a deep breath. As loud as you can, name the days of the week. Try saying the months of the year and then the alphabet. Lastly, count from 1 to 20. Remember to speak as loudly as you can.



More Practice

- □ Read the road signs in a strong voice as you drive or ride down the road.
- Read out loud every day –speak loudly and with expression. Is there a question mark or an exclamation point at the end of a sentence? Use your tone and pitch to show this.
- □ Exaggerate your mouth opening and really move your tongue and lips when you speak.
- □ Do you have a favorite song? Sing whenever you can and use a comfortable pitch range. Singing uses the same muscles that we use for speech.
- □ Be intentional about using melody and inflection when you are talking.
- □ If you feel that you are "running out of breath" when you are talking, pause more often and take an extra breath.

Involving Your Team

A speech-language pathologist can provide assessment and individual recommendations for maintaining your voice and speech.

Do you need help finding a speech-language pathologist? Contact the National Parkinson Foundation Helpline at 1-800-473-4636 (1-800-4PD-INFO), and a Parkinson information specialist can help you search for speech-language pathologists in your area.