



## Voice Rest

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When high profile performers go on voice rest it can cause a media frenzy, especially if it means cancelling performances or delaying a tour. In the past few weeks, several theater, TV and film stars made headlines when they announced that their doctors ordered them to go on vocal rest.

. Here are some facts on voice rest and when it is (or isn't) appropriate for patients:

**What do they mean by rest?** Doctors and Therapists often distinguish between complete voice rest and partial or "relative" voice rest. Complete voice rest is exactly what it sounds like: no voice production whatsoever. This includes speaking, yelling, singing, humming, coughing, whispering or mouthing words. Partial voice rest refers to limiting a patient's vocal demands, both in terms of intensity (how loud or effortful their voice is) and how frequently they use their voice. The laryngologist/therapist may recommend that the patient only use her voice for a certain duration of time (e.g., no more than 10-15 minutes per hour.) Depending on the situation, this can mean avoiding or limiting singing or theater performances, or avoiding all voice use outside of performance.

**How does this help my voice?** Voice rest is principally useful to reduce swelling and prevent further damage following an acute vocal injury.

**What kinds of conditions require voice rest?** Voice rest is most often used to treat vocal fold hemorrhage, laryngitis, and swelling from overuse. It is also recommended after vocal fold surgery, to prevent further trauma to the vocal folds and to facilitate healing.

**How long should I rest my voice?** Voice rest is typically a short term recommendation, although the duration varies depending on the condition being treated. Furthermore, different physicians can have different protocols for how long a patient should go on voice rest, especially after surgery.

\* It should be noted that prolonged voice rest (more than a week) is almost never recommended, as it usually only serves to mask the problem and delay effective treatment. Unless the behaviors and conditions that first caused the problem are addressed, symptoms are likely to resume with normal use of the voice.