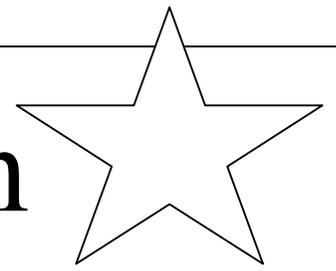


# To Your Health



VA Palo Alto Health Care System ★ Patient Education Newsletter ★ Winter 2001

*"Promoting good health through information."*

## Take Care of Your Voice

Karen Kapolnek, MA, Speech Pathologist

Did you know that people can use their voice wrong or too much and get a voice disorder? Using the voice wrong or too much can cause growths on the vocal cords (the tissue that vibrates to make your voice). Those growths can cause hoarseness and pain. This can happen to people who use their voices a lot (singers, actors, and teachers), but it can happen to other people too if they do not take care of their voice.

So, here are some things you can do to help take care of your voice:

- Relax the muscles in your neck when you talk.
- Talk at a natural pitch for you, neither too deep nor too high.
- Do not yell. It has been reported that U.S. Army drill instructors had swelling and redness of their vocal cords due to yelling after only 5 days on the job.
- If you often clear your throat, try to swallow instead. Frequent throat clearing can damage the vocal cords.
- If you smoke, stop. Smoking can cause hoarseness and cancer in the mouth and throat.

*(Continued on back...)*

## ★ Recipe for Health ★

### *Tomato, Orange, and Tarragon Soup*

*Serves 6*

- 1 Tsp olive oil
- 12 ounces white or red potatoes, peeled & diced
- 1 medium yellow or white onion, sliced
- 3 large tomatoes, chopped (about 1½ lb)
- 2 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 Tbsp chopped fresh tarragon or 2 Tsp dried
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- ¼ Tsp salt (optional)
- Freshly ground pepper to taste
- 1 Tsp grated orange rind
- 1 cup fresh orange juice (3-4 medium oranges)

In a heavy nonstick saucepan, heat oil over medium-high heat. Sauté potatoes and onion for 2-3 minutes, or until onion is translucent. Stir in tomatoes, broth, tarragon, garlic, salt, and pepper. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 20-25 minutes, or until vegetables are tender.

In a blender or food processor, process soup in small batches until liquefied. Pour through a sieve to remove coarse skins. Discard skins. Stir orange rind and juice into strained soup. Reheat or serve chilled.

Calories	111	Cholesterol	0mg
Total Fat	1G	Sodium	32mg
		Saturated Fats	0G

## How much is enough?

Pick the correct portion size for each example:		A	B
1.	3 ounces of meat	A deck of cards	Your checkbook
2.	1 ounce of cheese	4 dice	4 dominoes
3.	1 cup of potatoes or rice	A baseball	A softball
4.	1 medium potato	Computer mouse	Can of soda
5.	2 ounce bagel	Hockey puck	Compact disk (CD)
6.	1 Tbsp cream cheese or peanut butter	Walnut	Golf ball

## Herbal Remedies: The Basics

Noelle Hasson, PharmD

### What is herbal therapy?

Herbal remedies are considered a food supplement. Herbal remedies are not under the strict control of the Food and Drug Administration, so there is no guarantee that these products are safe or effective. Unlike other drugs, no testing needs to be done before a company can claim that an herbal product works. For these reasons, herbal remedies are not available through your VA pharmacy.

### What should I know before I take an herbal product?

Many herbal therapies do have an effect on your body. Before starting any new treatment, you should know what the risks and benefits are.

Always remember that herbs, like medications, can have good effects as well as unwanted side effects or interactions with your other medications. Tell your primary care provider if you are taking any herbal remedies.

Herbs are not miracle cures. You should never stop taking your prescription medicine without speaking to your health care provider. Doing so may be dangerous to your health.

### Where can I get more information?

There are many sources of information on herbs. Your first source of medical information should always be your health care provider. Pharmacists, physicians, and nurses are all good people to ask. Always make sure that any written information you use is from a neutral source, not advertising by an herbal manufacturer. ★

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## How much is enough?

*Answers*

The answer in each case is A. You probably noticed a trend in these answers - the smaller size is the right size! We tend to think of bigger is better, but in the case of food, bigger usually means more calories and more fat. Comparing foods to common items, like in the quiz, can help you keep your portions moderate without the trouble of measuring everything.

Keep in mind that eating too much can contribute to weight problems, even if you are eating good, healthy foods. Don't be fooled by thinking, "it's OK, it's only chicken." The amount counts, with every food!

### *Voice (cont.)*

- Caffeine and alcohol dry out the vocal cords. If you drink these, think about cutting back.
- Some medicines cause dryness or hoarseness. If you think you could be having this problem, ask your provider (doctor or nurse practitioner) about it.
- If your voice gets hoarse from using it too much, use it less (or not at all) for a few days. With your provider's approval, drink six to eight 8-oz glasses of water every day to improve the vocal cord tissue. Some people should not drink a lot of water, so be sure to check with your doctor first.

Many people get hoarse at some time in their lives due to being sick or yelling. However, if you get hoarse or have pain in the throat that you cannot explain and that lasts more than 2 days, call your VA provider. Hoarseness and pain can be due to disease. They can also be due to using the voice wrong or too much. In this case, your provider may send you to speech pathology for a voice evaluation and therapy. ★

