



Reducing vocal tension using humming exercises and lip trills

These exercises may be given to you by a speech and language therapist if you are experiencing dysphonia (voice difficulties).

Aim of the exercises

These exercises aim to reduce unnecessary muscle tension around your voice box. A relaxed, open vocal tract can help to promote improved voice quality.

Before you begin:

- Ensure that you are in a quiet, relaxed environment.
- Make sure that your shoulders are relaxed.
- If your speech and language therapist has given you exercises to relax your face, neck or shoulders, you may like to do those first.

Exercise 1: Relaxing

Breathing: Begin taking a few nice deep breathes out... and in.... via your nose.

Yawn-sigh: Next, take a deep breathe in with an open mouth. Feel the air enter your lungs and your throat widen. Now, breathe out with your mouth open, as if having a yawn. Feel the breath flow out freely. Repeat and on the exhale make a loud sigh. Don't force the voice...just let it come out easily with your breath.

Exercise 2: Lip trills

Produce lip trills as demonstrated to you by the speech and language therapist during your appointment. Watch this video as a reminder <https://youtu.be/LSbmghPvW60>

Try these without and then with making a "brrrrr" voice sound.

Try gliding up and down in pitch.

Exercise 3a: Humming

Produce a gentle "mmmmmmm" (humming sound).

Aim for a smooth, clear sound. It will not be loud.

Stop after a few seconds or if your voice starts to sound hoarse.

Be aware of the sound resonating around your nose and lips – you should feel a tingling on your lips, or vibration on your nose/lips.

Exercise 3b: Develop humming by adding a vowel sound

Once you can achieve a clear voice quality with the yawning and humming, you can start to add in some speech sounds.

“mmmmmmaaaaaah”

Try to keep a clear smooth voice quality. Make sure that you glide straight from the humming into the speech sound without a gap in between.

mmmoooooh

mmmmy

mmmmmay

mmmmeeeee

mmmore

Exercise 3c: Shorten the “mmm” to produce single words:

moo my may me more ma myrrh mine mean many money marry

Then words beginning with “h”:

he hah hey here high her how who

Then words beginning with “w”:

we why way war woo where were we're wow

We use words beginning with “m”, “h” or “w” because they have a gentle ‘easy onset’.

Tip: If the words are coming out as if you are “singing”, then now try “saying” the words in your spoken voice instead.

Exercise 3d: Extending humming into phrases:

- My mother
- Many men
- Move over
- Much money
- Marry me
- More men
- Merry millions
- Mighty moon
- Morning Melody

Concentrate on how your voice box feels when it is producing a smoother voice quality.

Try to keep your clearer, “easy” voice quality going throughout the phrases and into sentences.

Exercise 3e: Extending humming into sentences:

- Mandy makes mince
- Many men make much work
- My Mum makes bread on Mondays
- Marry me in marvellous May
- Many merry men make noise in Morecombe Bay
- Nine mean men manage millions
- Moonlight murder mystery by night
- Mysterious market manager is muffin millionaire
- Not monotone, but marvellous melodic music
- Moonlight mountain climb makes momentous memories

Tips for practising:

Think about how you will make time to do the exercises frequently throughout the day. Some people make a chart or timetable like the example below, for motivation and structure to practise.

If you find that you lose the smoother, easier, clearer voice quality once you start developing the exercises, then go back a step, or right back to gentle humming “mmmmm” (ensuring you can feel the vibration on your lips).

It may be useful to record yourself speaking and listen to it back. This will help you to monitor what is really happening when you speak. Try this in a range of situations, e.g., with friends / family, a work phone call etc.

We do not recommend that you do these exercises while driving. Your attention should be on the road and you will not be able to concentrate fully on both driving and your voice quality.

Contact us

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To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

Caroline Parry, RBFT, Speech and Language Therapy, March 2024

Next review due: March 2026

	Tick when completed						Comments
	Lip trill practise			Humming exercises practised			
	1	2	3	1	2	3	
Monday							
Tuesday							
Wednesday							
Thursday							
Friday							
Saturday							
Sunday							