

Voice Care

Sopranos whose natural speaking voices are quite low compared to their singing voices are sometimes concerned that this disparity may be harmful to their singing careers. Some of these singers are right to be concerned, for singing/speaking pitch disparity may contribute to voice problems.

Contemporary literature on singers' dysphonia (difficulty in producing vocal sounds) has identified speaking in a low pitch as a significant factor contributing to vocal problems.

It can lead to vocal fatigue because it affects the relationship between subglottal air pressure (below the vocal cords) and pitch production. It can lead to strain because more energy and muscle effort is needed when speaking at low pitches.

Mezzo-sopranos and sopranos are expected to have a speaking voice range of 230-262 Hz. Low-pitch speaking by sopranos may be age-dependent, with younger sopranos having a basic speaking voice at about 224 Hz, middle-age sopranos at 218 Hz, and older sopranos at 214 Hz.

Pitch production may also be affected during a woman's premenstrual period, with the speaking voice lower and a wider pitch distribution. Singers who experience any of the symptoms listed above may want to check with their voice coach or teacher or with a voice pathologist about the levels of the voice they are using for speaking.

Singers often experience voice fatigue when they have voice disorders. Common complaints include the voice feeling tired and full and dry when speaking, and an aching throat. Fatigued singers also complain of increased effort and whole body fatigue when talking or singing, and they worry that they are doing something wrong.

Vocal fatigue may be caused by a host of different factors, including incorrect voice use, misuse, abuse, or organic or functional problems.

Singers who experience heartburn or other symptoms of stomach acid reflux are concerned that this condition might affect their voices. Gastroesophageal reflux and gastrolaryngeal reflux, in which gastric acid moves back up the esophagus and may even reach the larynx, can affect the voice as well as causing other health problems.

Refluxed acid may cause damage to the mucous membranes of the esophagus. It can cause not only heartburn, but also a number of problems related to voice production, including common harshness, halitosis, sore throat, bitter taste, dry mouth, cough during sleep, chronic throat clearing, phlegm, prolonged warm-up time for singers, and a sensation of a lump in the throat.