



Chronic Throat Clearing

Throat Clearing Elimination

Throat Clearing often starts in response to postnasal drainage, acid reflux, and/or dry throat and develops into a habit. Chronic throat clearing can be traumatic to your vocal folds/cords and your voice. Below is a program to help eliminate this potentially harmful and disruptive behavior.

1. INCREASE YOUR AWARENESS

- Throat clearing is often a subconscious act. You don't think about it, you just do it.
- Begin to track how often you are clearing your throat. Asking a friend or family member to point this out to you may be helpful. In the beginning, it may also help to keep an index card and make a mark each time you clear your throat. This will help **increase your awareness**.

2. REPLACE THROAT CLEARING WITH A SWALLOW

- If you catch yourself clearing, **take a drink of water** to substitute a good behavior for a bad one. Clearing our throat only provides temporary relief. Swallowing water will help to move the irritant—usually mucus—down and/or soothe an irritated or scratchy throat.
- You may find that using an **effortful swallow and/or chin-down** posture helps to more forcibly move the irritant.
- If you don't have water available, you can **swallow your saliva**.
- This will also help increase your awareness of the throat clearing behavior.

3. PREVENT YOUR THROAT CLEARING – ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

- As soon as the sensation to clear your throat arises, take a drink of water instead. Swallowing saliva works well too. By doing this, you've prevented your throat clearing *and* eliminated the irritant.
- If you need to, **take an additional swallow**. Mucus can become thick, persistent, and hard to move. It may take more than one swallow to totally eliminate the sensation to clear your throat.
- **Relaxed Throat Breathing or humming** to decrease laryngeal muscle tension
- **Humming + swallow** to use VF vibrations to break up mucus
- **Laryngeal massage** to reduce muscle tension and pass trigger sensation
- **Increase hydration** (64+ oz or half of your body weight in oz) to thin secretions and systemically lubricate the tissues of the throat.

Last resorts: Gentle throat clear (puff of air at vocal cords) or Huff cough (hard "h" from diaphragm)