WINTER BLUES

By Sheri Gould

I love the idea of singing the blues, as long as it's not YOU singing about vocal issues in the winter! It's definitely that time again, and I'm here to give you some fresh tips to help keep you on your "A" game by keeping your voice healthy and ready to sing all winter.

Hydrate, Hydrate, Hydrate!

And I'm not just talking about drinking water. You need to hydrate yourself by the food choices you make and the air you breathe. Of course you need to drinks lots of water— that's always the order of the day. But now, with the dryness of the cold, you need to be even more intentional about what you drink, and perhaps… what you DON'T drink. There are lots of yummy warm drinks we associate with winter, and I say INDULGE! Just make sure that you pay attention to what you drink and when. If you are going to indulge in drinks that contain caffeine, be sure to watch the timing of your drinks so that you can be sure to RE-hydrate with lots of water before you intend to sing. Even that delicious hot chocolate has a little bit of caffeine (5 mg-compared to 95 mg in coffee).

Now is the time to definitely turn on your vaporizer- all day, not just at night. I am forever adding moisture to the air in my home through various measures. I open my dishwasher after a couple of minutes of the drying cycle to allow the steam to pour into my kitchen, then I leave it open to allow the remaining moisture to evaporate into the room. I leave the tea kettle boiling long after I've retrieved the water for my tea. (Just pay attention: *I've ruined more than one kettle by continuing to heat with no water in it!!*). I try to remove any lids once I'm done boiling something on the stovetop to allow the extra steam into the air. When showering, I DON'T run the overhead fan. Instead, I immediately open the door when I'm finished so that the moisture is absorbed into the rest of the house. Little things help to keep my home moisturized. If you get a little static electric shock after crossing the room, then your room is TOO DRY.
Don't forget to always breathe through your nose; it cleans, warms and MOISTENS the air you breathe!

Stay Healthy!

I love to stay *ahead* of illness. It's way better than dealing with a sore throat or cold. I load up with immunity boosters every day. I'm getting too old to deal with being sick! I make sure to gargle each night with good old Listerine, and if I feel a sore throat coming on, I will kick that up to 3 times a day. One of my favorite things to drink in the winter is a wonderful "tea" made with lemon, oranges, ginger, turmeric and honey. (For instructions check out this YouTube video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pvU-Cop-rkQ&feature=youtu.be) This tea is loaded with vitamin C because of the citrus fruits, but remember citrus fruits can be drying as well, so pay attention to your body and see if you need to add extra water to your diet.

If you do find yourself coming down with something, please take care with your voice. Coughing is very stressful to the vocal cords, so try to cough as infrequently as possible. Try a Hall's Breezer or another non-mentholated cough drop to help you throughout the day. At night, any cough drop you prefer is fine. Sip on Throat Coat tea to help soothe your aching throat (by Traditional Medicinals- available at most grocery stores and of course Amazon).

If you insist on singing, make sure to warm up gently and gargle with Vocal Rescue and perhaps prepare your voice with Throat Saver Vocal Spray (http://sherigould.bigcartel.com/product/vocal-rescue). Now is also a great time to consider making your OWN vocal spray to help you heal and stay moisturized. Mix 4 parts Aloe Vera Juice (I prefer George's; it's distilled and tastes like water!) to 1 part food grade vegetable glycerin. Mix in a small spray bottle and spray as often as you like. Not as powerful as the Throat Saver Spray but still a great alternative for all-day use. Above all, REST your voice with complete silence if you have any kind of sore throat. It's easy to do damage while you are sick.

Warm-Up with Steam!

It's imperative to continue your regimen of a daily warm-up, but now might be the time to switch your warm-up to the bathroom. First of all, turn your shower on as hot as possible to steam up the bathroom- then start your routine. If you typically shower in the morning, then you can simply continue to sing while you take your shower. The extra moisture will really help to warm up effectively and prepare your vocal cords. If you are ill, feel free to skip your warm-up unless you plan on singing.

Stay Out of the Cold Air!

As much fun as caroling can be, singing in the freezing cold (dry!!) air is not good for your voice at all. Please use care and caution. If you do choose to go, keep a scarf on, and when you can, pull it up over your nose to warm the air you breathe. Also, take along a hot cup of Throat Coat Tea (no lemon!) and sip in between singing.

Take care this winter; stay healthy and keep on singing!!