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music magazine  
for young players  
and singers!

THE MUSICIAN'S TEXTBOOK

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# Top 5 Vocal Health Tips

from *American Idol* Vocal Coach Debra Byrd

To meet the intense physical demands of singing on *American Idol*, contestants must keep their voices in tip top shape. Helping them along the way is Debra Byrd, *American* (and *Canadian Idol*'s) vocal coach and arranger. She helps *Idol* hopefuls find the right songs, arrange their music, keep their voices healthy, and prepare for their performances before millions of weekly viewers.

"Byrd," as she's known, shares her top tips for vocal health, which can help singers expand their ranges and keep their voices in good condition.

**1. No smoking!** "I get singers on *American Idol* and *Canadian Idol* who always try to justify their need to smoke... If you're really serious about a career as a singer, get rid of that as quickly as you can because it's in the way. Stop smoking. Period."

**2. Get lots of rest.** Unlike an instrumentalist who can put their instrument in a case, "your body is your case, so it's affected by everything. You must go to bed and get your rest. Getting enough sleep is essential."

**3. Don't abuse or overwork your voice.** "Being in high school, you want to yell and scream all the time, and talk on the phone... You have to learn when your voice is tired—and how to stop talking."

**4. Know what foods affect you.** For some people it's spicy, acidic, or dairy foods that cause acid reflux and excess phlegm, Byrd says. "You have to pay attention and monitor how these foods affect your body."

**5. Learn proper technique.** According to Byrd, almost all of today's *American Idol* contestants have had vocal training. "If you're



very serious, get some technique under your belt." Learn how to breathe, stand, and warm up your voice properly, Byrd advises.

Byrd's DVD *Vocal Help Now!* is available from [debrabyrd.com](http://debrabyrd.com). Her new series of *Sing Like American Idol* vocal music books, which include interactive CDs, are available through Alfred Publishing.—Fran Vincent