

## Singing for your Health

Singing has the power to uplift the soul, and as your spirit soars your health benefits too, whether you warble in the shower or sing along to mass chanting at football matches.

Singing expert Helen Astrid, from **The Helen Astrid Singing Academy** says, "When you sing you use far more of your lung capacity than normal, which oxygenates the blood and helps circulation. Singing exercises the respiratory muscles and helps asthmatics breathe more easily. It's a good way to get some gentle aerobic exercise; it also improves your posture and straightens your back and shoulders. If you sing regularly, it'll keep your voice youthful because it exercises the vocal cords. As your voice is closely bound up with your identity, the way you use it reflects your inner mental health; if we're fed up, our voice sounds flat and harsh, when we're happy it mirrors our joy."



## Singing for your patients

- Singing helps those suffering from depression to gain control. Endorphins, our feel-good hormones, are released when we sing and this reduces stress
- Singing helps stammerers regain use of muscle groups
- Singing helps stroke victims as it improves the immune system
- Singing helps Parkinson's sufferers
- Singing helps Alzheimer's sufferers
- Singing helps asthmatics breathe deeper
- Singing helps children with co-ordination
- Singing improves well-being of Senior Citizens

As part of a three-year study examining how singing affects health, a Senior Choir was formed by the Levine School of Music, in Washington D.C. The average age was 80 years old. The seniors involved in the choir showed significant health progress including:

- Less medical visits
- Fewer eyesight problems
- Less incidence of depression
- Less need for medication
- Less falls and other injuries

Lead researcher Dr. Gene D. Cohen, director of the Center on Aging, Health and Humanity at George Washington University says *"My surprise was not the fact that the intervention worked, but at the magnitude of the effect it had"*.

The seniors themselves noticed the significant health improvements:

- Feeling better in daily life
- Everyday voice quality better
- Easier breathing
- Better posture

Not only is singing excellent for patients of all ages, The Helen Astrid Singing Academy has facilitated singing workshops for medical professionals within the National Health Service including a Nursing Conference at Hammersmith Hospital and at the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, London. According to Helen Astrid, "Everyone benefits."

*"Learning to sing with Helen has been one of the best things I've ever done. She has a real talent for making the learning process great fun and I always end the session feeling energised and uplifted. I've gained understanding of the physiology underlying effective muscle use in order to achieve improved breathing control, and noticed a significant improvement in my lung function, even after the initial few lessons. I highly recommend singing as a means to improve both physical and mental wellbeing."*

Dr Gillian Tomlinson, MBChB, BSc, MRCP(UK)

*"I realise the health benefits of my singing lessons are twofold; both body and mind. For the body there's a tremendous aerobic workout when singing properly. The lungs open in ways they haven't for years. The practice of expanding one's vocal range is true exercise and after an hour's lesson I come away completely energised by adrenaline. Singing lessons are also very good for the mind; there's a tremendous sense of achievement when you realise you can do it. Coupled with that, you really have to think about musical form and learn to listen. A complete challenge."*

Geoffrey Pullen BDS (University of London), DDS (University of Southern California), Dentist and Clinical Director Connaught Village Dentistry

*"Singing makes me feel happier and healthier. I feel very positive after each session."*

Dasha, Intensive Care Nurse, Brompton Hospital

*"Lessons have been a voyage of discovery and delight. Helen has gradually increased my confidence, improved my range no end and showed me that I can sing despite previous protestations from my family. It's been exhilarating and always a great pleasure. Helen is patient, supportive, encouraging and utterly professional. I can never thank her enough for the joy and lasting treasure she has given me. I initially gave myself 10 lessons and am still having lessons after 10 years. There cannot be a better accolade for a teacher than that."*

Jill, Dr of Philosophy, B.Sc, PhD, AKC, MS Biol, C Biol.

*"After the passing of my musical mother, I felt a profound desire to sing. I arrived at my first lesson with Helen in September 2009, terrified to open my mouth lest I be off-key. Helen immediately put me at my ease and helped launch me on a rich journey of musical discovery. Fairly soon after my first lessons I was singing at folk workshops and music festivals in my native land, which was deeply connecting and rewarding. With Helen's support and guidance the emotional journey has been immense. My experience suggests singing could be an enriching and supportive experience for others suffering grief and loss; Helen's sensitive teaching has helped launch me on a new and rewarding path"*

*Liz Middleton MSc, DBO, SRO. Orthoptist & Smoking Cessation Adviser*

Singing teacher and singer Helen Astrid, is also author of 'Singing Tips at your Finger Tips'. Interspersed with facts and quotes from famous people, this book will unleash and transform your voice to its greatest potential, giving you a tip for every day of the year.

## Contact information

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The Helen Astrid Singing Academy is located in Strawberry Hill, Middlesex.  
[www.thehelenastridsingingacademy.com](http://www.thehelenastridsingingacademy.com)

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*The Link between Singing and Respiratory Health*, Jeanette Tamplin, M.Mus, B.Mus (hons), RMT Austin Health, Melbourne.  
The Australian Journal of Music Therapy, 2009 p.45

*Choral Singing and psychological well-being*  
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