



# High School Musical

## Lead teenage actor beats lingering laryngitis & mononucleosis

by JAMIE OSKIN, ND

SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD MATT LOVED TO SING AND WAS THRILLED TO HAVE RECENTLY SNAGGED THE lead role in his high school musical. Shortly afterwards, however, he developed laryngitis and a sore throat, which was seriously interfering with his rehearsal schedule.

**Thanks to homeopathy, Matt got the opportunity to take his bows on the stage after all.**



Matt's conventional physician prescribed antibiotics without first taking a throat swab or performing a rapid strep test to check for bacterial infection. Unfortunately, the first round of antibiotics didn't help, so the doctor prescribed a different antibiotic, still without a throat swab.

Albert Einstein once defined insanity as "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." In this case, Matt's problem likely was a viral infection, if two rounds of antibiotics hadn't helped a bit! Dissatisfied that Matt was no better after two and a half weeks of conventional treatment, Matt's mother brought her son for homeopathic treatment. Matt came along grudgingly; like many boys his age, the last place he wanted to be was in the doctor's office.

### Like swallowing glass

Matt complained of soreness on the roof of his soft palate and on the left side of his throat. He described it as "raw and burning," as if he were "swallowing glass." The pain was worse whenever he swallowed—whether he was swallowing cold drinks, hot drinks, food, or his own saliva (i.e., empty swallowing). He would wake from the pain at 4 a.m. with a very dry sore throat. The pain was worse if he was talking or coughing. Matt's voice was very hoarse and would crackle when he began to talk. The hoarseness would get worse from coughing and much worse from talking and singing. Interestingly enough, Matt reported that he had gone to California the weekend before, and his hoarseness and throat pain had improved in that rainy, humid weather. As soon as he was back in Arizona's hot, dry weather,



# HOARSE SENSE

## Natural Remedies for Laryngitis

**L**aryngitis is a swelling of the mucous membranes of the larynx (voice box), leading to hoarseness or complete voice loss. An upper respiratory virus, such as a cold, is the most common cause, but you can also lose your voice from misuse or overuse (too much yelling, talking, or singing), from vocal nodules (often the result of chronic overuse or misuse), from

exposure to allergens, or from constant irritation from stomach acid (gastro-esophageal reflux disorder).

### Shhh...

If you've lost your voice, don't try to get it back by forcing yourself to be heard! Resting your voice is one of the best ways to speed healing. But whatever you do, don't whisper—that is harder on your vocal cords than regular speaking. Try not to clear your throat either, since that causes irritation in the vocal folds, too; better to try to swallow instead, or cough, if you must. Also, drink plenty of fluids and try inhaling steam and using humidifiers, which will soothe the irritated vocal cords. If vocal misuse is a contributing factor, seek help from a vocal therapist or an Alexander Technique teacher.

however, the symptoms worsened.

Matt continually felt the need to try to clear the back of his throat in an effort to hawk up mucus, but he was almost never successful in bringing any up. In answer to my questioning, he described the mucus as thick, sticky, tasteless, odorless, and light green. Additionally, Matt had a cough that was worse from deep breathing. He described being able to feel burning in his bronchi. The cough was triggered by the thick mucus covering his larynx that he just couldn't spit out, so he was forced to swallow it. Since being sick, Matt also reported extreme fatigue, despite getting eight hours of sleep each night. On looking inside Matt's throat, I saw no redness, discharge, or pus, but the back of his throat was lined with yellowish-green

mucus. The rest of his physical exam was unremarkable.

### Following up on a hunch

Since Matt didn't have the signs and symptoms of strep throat and did not respond to antibiotic therapy, a viral origin seemed more likely to me. Because he was a teenager with intense fatigue and a bad sore throat, I decided to run some blood tests to rule out an acute mononucleosis (Epstein Barr Virus) infection. I thought it important to try to get a diagnosis in Matt's case for a number of reasons: first, he hadn't responded to conventional antibiotic treatment; second, knowing the diagnosis could give us important information regarding prognosis; and third, an accurate diagnosis can

### Six remedies for relief

Many homeopathic remedies have been known to help acute laryngitis: here are some that are used most often.

**Aconite.** Hoarseness, with sudden onset, especially after exposure to cold, dry wind; from a fright or shock; or from overuse. Restless, fearful, anxious, feverish. Worse at night, after midnight, from cold air, from talking. Dry, short cough with difficulty breathing in.

**Argentum nitricum.** Laryngitis of singers or speakers; can become chronic. Sensation of splinter in throat on swallowing. High notes cause a cough. Thick mucus in airways. Continued, vain attempts to swallow; food lodges in throat. Anxious, nervous, impulsive; stage fright. Thirsty. Desires sweets. Better from cool air.

**Causticum.** Laryngitis from exposure to cold, from paralysis of laryngeal muscles, from overuse in singers, from anger or grief. One of the most commonly used remedies for laryngitis. Chronic hoarseness after acute laryngitis. Raw throat; dry cough makes chest sore; burning. Mucus accumulates that is hard to expectorate. Worse dry cold winds; better damp, wet weather. Worse 3–4 a.m.

**Phosphorus.** Well known for its use in coughs and bronchitis, this remedy is also frequently indicated in laryngitis. Inflamed, sore, raw larynx; cannot talk due to pain. Loss of voice from prolonged talking. Violent tickling in larynx while speaking. Tickling in throat leads to cough. Worse cold air, emotions, weather changes, talking, laughing, eating warm things. Better cold food, washing with cold water.

**Spongia tosta.** Larynx feels dry, burning, constricted, tickling. Early stages of croup. May be accompanied by dry barking cough. Worse at night, from touch, when swallowing, and during sleep. Suffocative feelings. Better warm food and drinks; lying with head low.

**Arum triphyllum.** Hoarseness. Expectoration of much mucus; constant hawking. Throat feels swollen, constricted, burning. Voice uncertain, uncontrollable; cracks, goes to a high pitch, changes pitch. Worse talking, singing; "clergyman's sore throat."

help us to pick out the common symptoms of the disease versus the *characteristic* (i.e., unique and, therefore, important to a homeopathic prescription) symptoms in the case.

I decided that the homeopathic remedy *Causticum* best matched Matt's main acute problems of raw and burning pain in his soft palate and throat, thick mucus lining his larynx precipitating the cough, and laryngitis. If my hunch that he was suffering from an acute mononucleosis infection was correct, then his laryngitis would be somewhat *characteristic*, since it's common to have a sore throat with mono, yet not as common to have laryngitis with mono. Also, *Causticum* is an important laryngitis remedy, especially in singers. Additionally, the symptom of thick mucus lining the lar-

ynx that was difficult to expectorate and had to be constantly swallowed matched *Causticum* very well. And most characteristic was that Matt's symptoms got better in the wet weather when he went to California and got worse again when he came home to the hot dry weather in Arizona. Because Matt was so acutely sick, I gave a high potency, *Causticum* 10M, three times a day.

I also considered the remedy *Argentum metallicum* because it matched the symptoms of hoarseness in singers and thick mucus; but I decided against it because when *Argentum metallicum* is needed, the mucus is usually easily expectorated. Below is a copy of my repertorization using RADAR 10.5 homeopathic software by Archibel.



**A ha!**

Within the next week Matt's lab results came back, showing that he was positive for an acute EBV infection—that is, he had mono. This was good to know, since there are no conventional treatments for mono except rest and drugs to relieve pain or fever. And in full-blown mono infections, the overwhelming fatigue can often last four to six months *after* the throat pain resolves. In my experience, however, kids with acute mono infections who are treated homeopathically recover much more quickly than those who are treated conventionally.

I checked on Matt three days after he began taking *Causticum*. His cough was completely gone—along with the phlegm that had covered his larynx and caused the cough. His throat was less painful by about 25%, his hoarseness was getting better at about the same rate, and his fatigue was greatly improved. These positive changes meant we were on the right track, so I kept him on *Causticum* 10M three times a day until his hoarseness and sore throat fully resolved about two weeks later.

**The show must go on**

At that point, Matt was feeling in good voice and just itching to get back to practice for the musical. He had made steady progress in his overall energy levels, but he was still not strong enough for a full-blown rehearsal schedule. As he began to ease back into a limited school and practice schedule, he experienced a setback—some new sinus-related symptoms and a decline in energy. I prescribed *Silica*, which quickly took care of his sinusitis, and then started him back on *Causticum* (50M this time) to help with his overall recovery from the acute mono infection.

Six weeks after he began homeopathic treatment for his throat problems and mono, Matt was completely back to normal. This was an excellent outcome—since it is quite common for teens to suffer with lingering fatigue for many months after a mono infection. Luckily, Matt's theater director did not give up on Matt during his illness nor give away his lead role to the understudy. Thanks to homeopathy, Matt got the opportunity to take his bows on the stage after all.



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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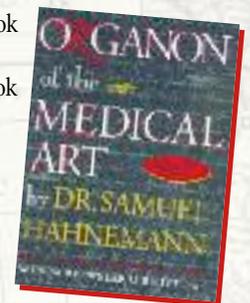
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