Laryngitis

Laryngitis is a common accompaniment of a cold or sore throat, and an after-effect of strenuous yelling. Coughing sometimes goes along with hoarseness. Though usually temporary and inconsequential, it can be a symptom of serious life-threatening illnesses such as cancer.

What causes laryngitis?
Hoarseness can arise from many causes, some of them under your control, some not:
• Smoking
• Alcohol use, especially heavy drinking
• Allergies
• Gastrointestinal reflux that reaches up to the larynx
• A viral or bacterial infection
• Wear and tear on vocal cords from yelling or crying, or simply from aging
• Severe anxiety or other psychological factors
• Nodes, polyps, or ulcers on the vocal cords, usually caused by stressing the voice in some way
• They can also arise from smoking or exposure to air pollution
• Serious illness, such as cancer, thyroid problems, or neurological disorders

How can you prevent or treat it?
• Don't smoke. If cigarettes make you hoarse, that is an urgent sign that it's time to quit.
• Avoid alcohol and go easy on spicy foods.
• Don't overuse your voice. If you are frequently called upon to speak or sing, professional voice training can help you conserve your voice and avoid hoarseness.
• Drink plenty of fluids and try to keep the air you breathe humidified.
• Try not to develop the habit of clearing your throat, which can make matters worse.
• Don't whisper. This strains your vocal cords more than talking.

When should you worry about hoarseness?
If hoarseness has bothered you for more than two weeks, particularly in the absence of a cold or flu, or if it is painful and you can't seem to get rid of it, you should be medically evaluated. (Difficulty in swallowing, a lump in your neck, and coughing up blood are symptoms that need immediate medical attention.).