Protecting Your Hearing Health

Student Information Sheet on Noise-Induced Hearing Loss

Standard Version

National **A**ssociation of **S**chools of **M**usic
Performing **A**rts **M**edicine **A**ssociation

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Protecting Your Hearing Health

An NASM – PAMA
Student Information Sheet on Noise-Induced Hearing Loss

- **Hearing health is essential to your lifelong success as a musician.**
- **Your hearing can be permanently damaged by loud sounds**, including music. Technically, this is called Noise-Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL). Such danger is constant.
- **Noise-induced hearing loss is generally preventable.** You must avoid overexposure to loud sounds, especially for long periods of time.
- The closer you are to the source of a loud sound, the greater the risk of damage to your hearing mechanisms.
- Sounds over 85 dB (your typical vacuum cleaner) in intensity pose the greatest risk to your hearing.
- Risk of hearing loss is based on a combination of sound or loudness intensity and duration.
- Recommended maximum daily exposure times (NIOSH) to sounds at or above 85 dB are as follows:
    - 85 dB (vacuum cleaner, MP3 player at 1/3 volume) – 8 hours
    - 90 dB (blender, hair dryer) – 2 hours
    - 94 dB (MP3 player at 1/2 volume) – 1 hour
    - 100 dB (MP3 player at full volume, lawnmower) – 15 minutes
    - 110 dB (rock concert, power tools) – 2 minutes
    - 120 dB (jet planes at take-off) – without ear protection, sound damage is almost immediate
- Certain behaviors (controlling volume levels in practice and rehearsal, avoiding noisy environments, turning down the volume) reduce your risk of hearing loss. Be mindful of those MP3 earbuds. See chart above.
- The use of earplugs and earmuffs helps to protect your hearing health.
- Day-to-day decisions can impact your hearing health, both now and in the future. Since sound exposure occurs in and out of school, you also need to learn more and take care of your own hearing health on a daily, even hourly basis.
- It is important to follow basic hearing health guidelines.
- It is also important to study this issue and learn more.
- If you are concerned about your personal hearing health, talk with a medical professional.
- If you are concerned about your hearing health in relationship to your program of study, consult the appropriate contact person at your institution.
- This information is provided by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) and the Performing Arts Medicine Association (PAMA). For more information, check out the other NASM-PAMA hearing health documents, located on the NASM Web site at the URL linked below. http://nasm.arts-accredit.org/index.jsp?page=NASM-PAMA_Hearing_Health