

Protecting Your Hearing Health Information on Noise-Induced Hearing Loss

Hearing health is essential to your lifelong success as a musician. Noise-induced hearing loss is largely 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 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) – 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 basis. If you are concerned about your personal hearing health, talk with a medical professional.

You may wish to add an app to your mobile device that can measure the dB level. Musicians' earplugs may be purchased for those performing in high dB situations such as large ensembles.