Protecting your hearing in a headphone-driven world

How do headphones and personal listening devices (PLDs) impact hearing?

- Studies show students who listen to PLDs at 50% volume for an hour a day showed symptoms of noise-induced hearing loss (Sulaiman et al., 2014).
- A study of Augustana students showed that 66% of participants used PLDs at safe volume levels (33% were unsafe), and half of the participants experienced symptoms of noise-induced hearing loss after listening (Gallichio & Perreau, 2018).

Signs of noise-induced hearing loss:

- Experiencing ringing or other noises in ears
- Hearing muffled noise and speech, especially after taking headphones off
- Having difficulty hearing high-pitched noises

Adjusting your headphone usage can help prevent unwanted hearing damage:

- Wear headphones for shorter periods of time (e.g., 1-hr intervals). Take a 10-min listening break for every hour of listening.
- Try headphones (over-the-ear, noise canceling, volume limiting) as they reduce background noise better. Avoid earbuds that are not custom made. When possible, use speakers.
- Keep the volume down on your headphones. Avoid increasing volume above 2/3 of slider bar. Set volume limit, see right.
- Volume limit on devices
  - IPhone
    1. Settings
    2. Music
    3. Volume Limit
    4. Slide Volume bar to at least 2/3 max volume
  - Android
    1. Settings
    2. Sounds and Vibrations
    3. Volume
    4. Volume Lock

If you are concerned about your hearing, contact our Center (309-794-7358; dorigarro@augustana.edu).

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