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Study: Teen hearing loss on the rise

Here's some unnerving news for parents worried that loud music might be damaging their kids' hearing: Hearing loss among teens has increased significantly in the United States, according to a new study.

Josef Shargorodsky of the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston and colleagues examined data collected from more than 4,600 12- to 19-year-olds by two ongoing federal surveys in 1988 to 1994 and 2005 to 2006.

The prevalence of hearing loss increased from 14.9 percent in the 1988-1994 period to 19.5 percent in the 2005-2006 period, a rise of about 31 percent, the researchers reported in the [Journal of the American Medical Association](#).

The majority of hearing loss was slight, but the prevalence of mild or worse hearing loss increased 77 percent. One in 20 children in this age group had mild or worse hearing loss, according to the most recent survey. High-frequency hearing loss was more common than low-frequency. Most of the time the loss was in one ear. Girls were much less likely than boys to have lost some hearing.

Although the study did not examine the reason for the hearing loss, the researchers noted that other research has found that listening to music on portable stereo devices can play a role. They also noted that even a slight [hearing loss](#) can cause psychological, social and learning problems for kids.

By Rob Stein | August 17, 2010; 4:00 PM ET

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Comments

Is anyone surprised by this?

Posted by: [didnik](#) | August 17, 2010 4:53 PM | [Report abuse](#)

It's not just the portable stereo devices - go to the movies sometime - the decibel level is outrageous even in G-rated films. I always have to stuff my ears with paper to stand it. It amazes me that parents with small children in the theaters don't seem to be concerned.

Posted by: [MAT2](#) | August 17, 2010 5:00 PM | [Report abuse](#)

Whats the big deal. You do not have to hear, to text.

Posted by: [dangreen3](#) | August 17, 2010 5:14 PM | [Report abuse](#)

Of course, the advice will fall on deaf ears!

Posted by: [kblgca](#) | August 17, 2010 5:18 PM | [Report abuse](#)

I remember mom and dad telling me to sit back from the TV because my vision would ultimately be affected. I also recall them telling me to keep the music to a certain level because it would affect my hearing as well. Why do parents today not think about stuff like this? June and Ward Cleaver, where are you?

I completely understand the hi-fi's they had back then cannot begin to compare to what we have today, but at some point parents have to step in and parent.

Posted by: [gladiatorgal](#) | August 17, 2010 5:27 PM | [Report abuse](#)

The kids are listening to their I-Pods too much, and at too loud of a volume.

Posted by: [liberalsareblind](#) | August 17, 2010 6:20 PM | [Report abuse](#)

They'll be murdered by a Craigslist hookup gone awry or will have committed suicide as a result of mean girls taunting texts and Facebook posts, before their hearing loss becomes a big problem.

Posted by: [pamschuh9](#) | August 17, 2010 6:25 PM | [Report abuse](#)

WHAT!! CAN'T HEAR YOU!!

I have been listening to music with my earphones at very high volume since I was 28 years old. Am 56 now and continue to listen my music ONLY with my earphones at very high volume. I don't like to disturb my neighbors so I listen my music with earphones only. I love music loud but it's not good for neighbors.

I have the best hearing. I was tested recently and the doc said there was absolutely no problems with my hearing.

Are these people exaggerating about teen hearing loss?

Posted by: coqui44 | August 17, 2010 6:38 PM | [Report abuse](#)

The relation of loud sounds to hearing loss is well established (see <http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/hearing/noise.asp>).

The effects of loud sounds on hearing varies somewhat by unknown individual factors. Given the adverse effects of hearing loss on functioning, few would give an informed and voluntary consent for an experiment to determine whether they possessed unique factors that would protect their hearing from the adverse effects of loud noise.

The question is: How to prevent hearing loss from loud sounds most effectively and with cost-efficiency.

1. -- Education -- widespread dissemination of information about the loss of hearing from exposure to loud noise in a form and in ways that research has determined are most effective and cost-efficient.
2. -- Limits on noise volume in all electronic devices with an override that allows louder volume with a continuous action (e.g., holding a button down).
3. Citizen Activism -- Speaking up when noise levels are too high, e.g., at a dance, a concert; avoiding such events while telling the promoters of the reason for the avoidance. (The pocketbook has power.)
4. A tax on all electronic equipment that can provide loud noise with the money raised designated for (a) prevention (see education above) and (b) for paying for health care coverage for those who suffer noise induced hearing loss/impairment. This tax would be adjusted in good part on the basis of the cost of care AND the prevalence of noise caused hearing loss. Seeing this tax when purchase electronic sound producing equipment could encourage consumers to speak up about and act to minimize noise induced hearing loss.

Other ideas?

The next focus concerns how to implement the best ideas.

Posted by: jimb | August 17, 2010 7:51 PM | [Report abuse](#)

The loss of hearing in one ear is inconsistent with ipods causing the damage. Darn those controls!

Posted by: mus81 | August 17, 2010 7:54 PM | [Report abuse](#)

Another regurgitated myth....

Posted by: askgees | August 17, 2010 8:04 PM | [Report abuse](#)

Ear buds. We were warned with statistical evidence in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s that inner-ear speaker devices were dangerous. The right-wing Big Business and politicos machine supporting them shouted the medicos down, much the same way they did about smoking, the air pollution and juvenile asthma connection, lead-based paint, asbestos and even 43s insistence that mercury and arsenic in the water supply was a good thing in small doses.

Let's face it, right-wingers are bad for your health.

Posted by: BigTrees | August 17, 2010 8:33 PM | [Report abuse](#)

On those few occasions when I've gone to a music concert at the Verizon Center, I've always taken along a pair of earplugs to dampen the sound. The incredible volume of sounds that bounces around that place has got to do damage to eardrums and hearing. I cannot understand the attraction of blaring, body-penetrating music when it can create so much damage to hearing. Music concerts have been this way for at least 30 years!

Posted by: ballstonbill | August 17, 2010 8:41 PM | [Report abuse](#)

AMERICA'S PEACEFUL NIEGHBORHOODS HAVE BEEN DESTROYED by AMERICA'S NIGGGAAAR MUSIC. ONLY A GROUP of MORONS WOULD WANT to LISTEN to THE MORALLY DEGENERATE SO-CALLED NIGGGAAAR MUSIC of

TODAY. THEIR EAR DRUMS are SMART to DIE OFF EARLY.

Posted by: LION7 | August 17, 2010 8:48 PM | [Report abuse](#)

Listening to music with earphones at a high volume is a personal choice and education may be the key to having listeners turn down the volume. However, like non smokers developing lung cancer from second hand smoke, developing hearing lost from music concerts is not a choice concert goers have made. How many times have you left a concert with your ears ringing? How many times do you wish you could go up to the guy at the sound board and demand he turn the volume down? I am sure he is wearing earplugs and can't really hear that the high volume makes the music sound like indistinguishable noise. Can't we have a decibel cop at each music venue or at least government mandates as to the maximum decibel level?

Posted by: megs8 | August 17, 2010 9:09 PM | [Report abuse](#)

Wow!

Posted by: drfields | August 17, 2010 9:37 PM | [Report abuse](#)

As parents, we have known for a while that whether or not our teens' ears are physically capable of hearing us, their brains are usually not hearing... or listening. Same goes for spouses. :-)

Posted by: nan_lynn | August 17, 2010 10:57 PM | [Report abuse](#)

As parents, we have known for a while that whether or not our teens' ears are physically capable of hearing us, their brains are usually not hearing... or listening. Same goes for spouses. :-)

Posted by: nan_lynn | August 17, 2010 10:58 PM | [Report abuse](#)

If you think the loss of hearing is bad--wait until you price the device(s) to help you hear--one of, if not the biggest, ripoffs in the world. 3 to 4 times the cost of a laptop--for a electronic device that probably has \$25 worth of true value--no wonder you see newspaper page after page(full) of ads for hearing aids, and get mailings upon mailings for the same. Huge profits are able to pay for the promotions--and the insurance companies and Medicare won't touch this with a 10 foot pole--for one of the critical "senses" like touch and sight. Not a peep out of AARP on this issue either.

It used to be the same way for eye glasses, before "Lens Crafters" changed the "market"--they should/could do the same for the hearing aid market--onsite testing and much less expensive devices in 1 hour or 1 day--made on site--is anyone listening??? (pun intended)

Posted by: Masonjazz | August 18, 2010 9:07 AM | [Report abuse](#)

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