

Personal stereo and hearing loss

Being able to hold your entire music collection in the palm of your hand is exciting but it could come at a cost to your hearing.

Hearing experts believe that as more people are using portable music players, more people could develop hearing loss. This is because the sound is directed directly into the ear unlike the surrounding environmental sound.

If the music volume through your headphones is too high and you are listening to music for a longer period there is a real risk of permanent damage to your hearing.

How do I know that I am at risk?

To find out if you are at risk of developing hearing loss from wearing your portable music player, you need to know how loud your particular player is and how long you use it for each day. This is difficult to measure as each music player varies in output. To protect your hearing from permanent music-induced hearing loss we suggest that you follow the following tips.

Always follow 60/60 rule

Research has found that the safe time limit for listening to music is one hour a day with the volume no higher than 60%. If you listen to music for more than an hour the volume should be turned down to below 60%.

Ear muff type headphones are better than ear buds

The ear bud type headphones which are preferred by music listeners are even more likely to cause hearing loss than the muff type earphones. This is because they fit tightly into the ear canal and the sound is directed straight into the ear drum.

Turn the music down

Use a well shielded ear phone/ear bud and turn the volume down as low as possible.

Take a break

Take breaks and don't listen to music for long periods of time.

Avoid

Try not to use a portable music player while you are exercising at the gym. The music volume usually needs to be turned up to drown out the machinery noise which will increase the risk of you getting hearing loss.

Workplace noise / headphone use

If your work involves wearing head phones and/ or loud noise or listening to music, you may have already been exposed to your safe amount of daily noise.

Automatic volume limiter

Look for a portable music player with an automatic volume limiter. This will limit the noise volume of the player to a safe level.

Do not "block out noise"

Set your music player to a comfortable level in a quiet room. Do not turn it up when you are in a noisy location to 'block out' the noise.

Do not change headphones between portable music players

Research has found changing headphones between music players will increase the noise volume and increase the risk to your hearing.

How do I know my music is too loud?

If you cannot hear other people talking when you are wearing headphones, or if other people have to shout at you to be heard at 1 metre away while you are wearing headphones, your music is too loud and you could be damaging your hearing.

If you are hearing ringing or buzzing sounds in your ear(s) or you find sounds muffled, stop using your portable music player and make an appointment to have your hearing checked by a qualified audiologist.