

# HEALTH AND SAFETY FOR THE MUSIC STUDENT

(updated 5/2014)

The primary factor in your health and safety is YOU. Be responsible, make good choices and be informed. The information below will outline musician-specific health and safety issues as you prepare for your career in music.

Each year, there will be a required meeting for all music majors to attend a session on the maintenance of hearing and a session on vocal and musculoskeletal health and injury prevention.

## HEARING HEALTH

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.

All music majors will be provided, free of charge, with a pair of earplugs that are specifically designed for musicians. These earplugs are also available to non-music majors who participate in university ensembles at a reduced cost of \$10 (available from the Music Department office). For more information on these earplugs, please visit: <http://www.etymotic.com/hp/er20.html>

The music department also owns a Personal Noise Dosimeter, which students and faculty can borrow for their own use and studies (available from the Music Department office). This dosimeter measures sound levels for many hours, and calculates the cumulative noise dose in percent and alerts you to the need for hearing protection. Information about the Personal Noise Dosimeter is available at: <http://www.etymotic.com/hp/er200comp.html>

This interactive chart demonstrates the noise-induced hearing loss risks associated with musical instruments and everyday activities: <http://www.etymotic-media.com/sliderule/>

This video offers valuable information about protecting musicians' most important asset – our hearing! <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksXy26NZ2HA>

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 takeoff) – 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. 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.

It is important to follow basic hearing health guidelines. It is also important to study this issue and learn more.

NASM and PAMA provide advisories and other information on the web:  
[http://nasm.arts-accredit.org/index.jsp?page=NASM-PAMA\\_Hearing\\_Health](http://nasm.arts-accredit.org/index.jsp?page=NASM-PAMA_Hearing_Health)

**If you are concerned about your personal hearing health, talk with a medical professional.**

*Excerpted from: "Protecting Your Hearing Health: Student Information Sheet on Noise-Induced Hearing Loss" NASM/PAMA: November 2011*

## **PERFORMANCE HEALTH**

Musicians use their bodies in specific and highly trained ways, and injuries can occur that can have lasting impact on performance ability. Performers need to be aware of vocal and musculoskeletal health issues that can affect them.

Musicians at all levels of achievement can suffer from repetitive stress injuries, neuromuscular conditions or dystonias, and psychological issues including severe performance anxiety.

As health concerns can vary widely depending on performance area, your primary source of information regarding performance health and injury prevention will be your applied music instructor. The Department of Music will also host many guest speakers and presenters to specifically address performance health, injury prevention, and treatment options.

**If you are concerned about your health as a musician, or are experiencing discomfort in practice or performance, talk with a medical professional.**

**Materials in Parks University Library** (Select list—browse ML3820 area for more titles)

Alan H.D. Watson, *The Biology of Musical Performance and Performance-Related Injury*, Scarecrow Press, 2009.  
ML3820 .W27 2009

William J. Dawson, *Fit as a Fiddle: The Musician's Guide to Playing Healthy*, Rowman and Littlefield/MENC, 2008.  
ML3820 .D38 2008

### **Websites**

The Complete Guide to the Alexander Technique:

<http://www.alexandertechnique.com>

Andover Educators (body mapping): <http://bodymap.org>

Dalcroze Society of America: <http://www.dalcrozeusa.org>

The Feldenkrais Method: <http://www.feldenkrais.com>

Performing Arts Medical Association: <http://www.artsmed.org>

*NOTE: Health and safety depend in large part on the personal decisions of informed individuals. Institutions have health and safety responsibilities, but fulfillment of these responsibilities can and will not ensure any specific individual's health and safety. Too many factors beyond any institution's control are involved. Individuals have a critically important role and each is personally responsible for avoiding risk and preventing injuries to themselves before, during, and after study at any institution. The information above does not alter or cancel any individual's personal responsibility, or in any way shift personal responsibility for the results of any individual's personal decisions or actions in any instance or over time to any institution.*