

# WHAT IS HEARING DAMAGE?

Hearing loss affects the quantity and the quality of sound. Understanding speech becomes difficult because words become indistinct. Excessive sound exposure damages hearing by over-stimulating the tiny hair cells within the inner ear. There are between 15,000 and 20,000 of these microscopic sensory receptors in the cochlea (coke-lee-ah). When these hair cells are damaged, they no longer transmit sound to the brain. Sounds become muffled. Hearing damage through noise exposure is permanently lost. Hearing aids are used to amplify the remainder of your hearing.

- Exposure to loud sound such as amplified music and drums can cause hearing damage.
- Hearing damage can take the form of temporary or permanent ringing in your ears, called Tinnitus as well as short and long term loss of your ability to hear clearly (noise induced hearing loss- NIHL).
- The risk of damaging your hearing depends on:
  - (1) how loud the music/drumming is
  - (2) how close you are to the speakers
  - (3) how long you're exposed to loud music/drumming
  - (4) how long and how loud you listen to your IPODS/earphones
  - (5) previous hearing damage
  - (6) your condition at the time (alcohol & dehydration make things worse)
  - (7) You also may be at risk if you have a family history of hearing loss.

## HEARING DAMAGE WARNING SIGNS

- Ringing or buzzing in your ears; sensitivity to loud noises.
- Difficulty hearing others when there is background noise.
- People sound like they're mumbling or talking too quickly, you have to ask them to repeat themselves.
- Needing to turn the volume on the TV, Radio or IPOD higher than other people do.
- Hearing the telephone better with one ear than the other. If you have any of these symptoms, get your hearing checked by a hearing professional. To prevent further damage...WEAR EAR PLUGS.

If you experience any of these early warnings, don't wait to seek help. Have your hearing checked by an audiologist. Protect your hearing by wearing ear plugs or turning down the volume.

## HEARING LOSS PREVENTION

- Use earplugs when playing drums or while attending concerts. Rolled up tissue paper/cotton balls provide NO protection.
- Monitor your IPOD/earphone use by how long and how loud you listen to it

- Sound levels in dance clubs can be as high as 115 decibels, which can cause damage in seconds.
- Stay at least 10 feet away from the speakers. Being directly in front of speakers is very risky.
- Request that sound levels be turned down if too loud at band rehearsals etc.
- You can also damage someone's hearing by shouting in their ear if you are at a loud concert or dance club.
- Alcohol and drugs lower your sensitivity to pain and increase the risk of hearing damage. Remember, alcohol dehydrates your body, drink plenty of water.
- Consider custom molded earplugs if you play drums, are in a band, and/or attend concerts frequently. They are affordable and will prevent hearing loss. Buying a hearing aid because of hearing loss will be more expensive later on!!!

## **EARPLUGS & IN EAR MONITORS**

### **Musician's Earplugs**

Custom fit earplugs, worn by many musicians, are made from an impression of the ear canal taken by an audiologist to have a mold made. Custom earplugs are comfortable, easy to wear, and filter sound much better than disposable plugs. They include a special filter that lets the listener hear music at a safe level without sacrificing sound quality. Instead of cutting out just the high frequencies, musician's plugs lower all the frequencies evenly in relation to your hearing. People who should consider Musician's Earplugs include: musicians, sound crews, recording engineers, nightclub employees, and other music industry professionals.