



Excerpt from NBC5.com
WMAQ TV Chicago

Dr. Malloy: iPod ear is on the rise

Mary Ann Malloy, M.D.
Read Dr. Malloy's Health Blog

Some may be going directly from listening to iPods to wearing hearing aids as loud noise damages their hearing. It's called "acoustic self-mutilation" and hearing loss, which is often the norm with aging, is occurring at younger ages and to a more severe degree in those who engage in acoustic self-mutilation. Hearing damage from noise used to be mainly from work exposure, but now leisure choices are responsible for much of the problem.

Loud noise damages the hair cells, which transmit sound in the inner ear, and prolonged exposure can damage these cells and kill the nerve cells, resulting in deafness. Damage is dependent not only on the intensity of the sound but also on how long the exposure. Sounds below the level of 80 decibels are considered safe.

SOUND LEVELS

Decibels	Sound
140+	Gunshot, Jet engine on take-off
110	Rock concert
100	Personal stereo (iPod, or other MP3 player) high volume
90	Hair dryer, lawn mower
60	Normal conversation

Signs that noise exposure may be causing damage include the ears ringing after exposure and painful or muffled hearing for hours or days. Now is the time to turn down the volume on the iPod, MP3 player or radio. Don't sit close to the stage at the rock concert. The damage is permanent and for many it can be avoided.

Dr. Kathy Foltner, Audiologist, added, "Here's a great consumer tip on the topic: if you are standing 3 feet from a person using an iPod and can hear the music, the person listening to the iPod is at risk for hearing loss! That's an easy tool for parents and others to help prevent hearing loss!"