

The Popularity for Portable Audio Players - A Public Health Threat

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Noise is a disturbance to the human environment that is escalating at such a high rate that it will become a major threat to the quality of human lives. No one on earth can escape the noise - an unwanted, disturbing sound that causes a nuisance in the eye of the beholder. There are numerous effects on the human environment due to the increase in noise pollution. Slowly, insensibly, we seem to accept noise and the physiological and psychological deterioration that accompanies it as an inevitable part of our lives.

Major sources of noise can be airplanes at take off and landing and industrial noise, yet we seem accept and enjoy countless other sounds from hard rock music to loud motor cycles.

The popularity of portable sound equipments such as Walkman - type radios and tape players has already produced a sharp increase in clinically verified hearing loss, especially among rock music addicts who prefer their music very loud.

Obviously, the Walkman-radio industry believes it is not their products that are the problem, rather it is improper use. If, they say, the volume is kept down, there would be no problem, which is equivalent to saying that if we all drove cautiously there would be no accidents.

Considering the earphone listening has been around for some 20 years, why has the problem only recently surfaced? Apparently the pattern of listening has changed. Currently, earphones are used while walking or running on noisy busy streets rather quiet area where the listener did not wish to disturb others. Now the volume must be turned up to overcome the noise of city traffic.

The listeners wants the Walkman to blot out the "noises of the city". A similar result occurs to users in noisy factory or industrial environments. Also in urban areas, many of the listeners prefer their music very loud.

Yet it has been argued that because noise produces no dramatic ill effects, the public has largely been uninterested in its suppression. It may be more to the point to say that the degree of annoyance and discomfort that people will endure is astonishing. If no steps are taken to lessen the effects of noise, we may expect a significant percentage of future generations to have hearing damage. It would be difficult to predict the total outcome if total population would suffer hearing loss. Conceivably, the loss could even be detrimental to our survival if it were ever necessary for us to be able to hear high frequencies.

Although noise is an integral part of civilization, it would appear that unless some definite steps are taken to reduce the present inordinate level in both industry and community generally, more people will become auditory cripples.

*Noise pollution leads to mind body suffering
Plus the ears, decrease volume, seek policing*

*Sweet soft music induces happy sleeping
Loud prolonged noise causes auditory crippling*

*One should not even mind job changing But
do not, at any cost lose your hearing
Lest your very dear Cell phone
You would not be hearing*

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The perception of sounds in day-to-day life is of major importance for human well being. Communication through speech, sounds from playing children, audio music, natural sounds in parkland are all examples of sounds essential for satisfaction in everyday life. Conversely all these are related to the adverse effect of sound - noise. According to International Program on Chemical Safety (WHO 1994) - "an adverse effect of noise is defined as a change in the morphology and physiology of an organism that results in impairment of functional capacity or increase the susceptibility of an organism to the harmful effects of other environmental influences".

The most important source of sound levels that create adverse effects are roadway noise (motor vehicle), aircraft noise and industrial noise. Secondary exposures may arise from loud audio media especially if practiced as a lifestyle such as prolonged portable audio player or turning TV and radio to louder levels.

We wish to emphasize the noise generated by TV in almost every home because most people are affected by this. Even if the volume is normal during TV programs but when music and advertisements come, sound levels automatically increase. This increase in sound is inbuilt and set by the Advertisement companies. Viewers feel lazy to reduce the intensity of sound by the remote, so the excessive noise is heard by the viewers. Most of the viewers are great - they would happily change the channels, but are very unhappy to reduce the volume. Children and many adults are not aware about the health hazards of excessive sound.

Collection of health consequences of elevated sound levels constitute one of the most widespread public health threats in industrialized countries. Current conditions expose ten millions of people to sound levels capable of causing hearing loss, but also are known to induce tinnitus, hypertension, vasoconstriction and cardiovascular impacts. Vasoconstriction can also contribute to erectile dysfunction. Beyond these effects, elevated noise levels create stress, increase workplace accident rates and stimulate aggression and other anti-social behavior. Other proven effects of high noise levels are increased frequency of headaches, fatigue, stomach ulcers and vertigo.

There is also correlation between low birth weight babies and high sound levels, and also correlations in abnormally high rates of birth defects, where expectant mothers are exposed to elevated sound levels, such as typical airport environments. Specific birth abnormalities included harelip, cleft palate and defects in spine.

As research unfolded, it became clear that there are a host of psychological and behavioral effects result from elevated sound levels, including sleep disturbances, reading development in children, stress and mental health.

These health effects, in turn, can lead to social handicap, reduced productivity, decreased performance in learning, absenteeism in the workplace and school, increased drug use and accidents.

PREVENTION IS BETTER THEN CURE