Make Listening Safe

Hearing loss is on the rise

1.1 billion
young people globally are at risk
of hearing loss due to unsafe
listening practices.

49 million
people aged 12-35 years live with
disabling hearing loss.

Among young people aged 12-35 years in
middle- and high-income countries:

1 in 2 young people listen to
unsafe levels of sound through
personal audio devices, such as
smartphones, MP3 players and
others.

40% are exposed to potentially
damaging levels of sound in
entertainment venues such as
nightclubs, bars and sporting
arenas.

Smartphone use is rising
globally
Across the world, more and
more people are using personal
audio devices that play music
and other audio content.

Listening to loud sound is
unsafe
Regularly listening to music or
other audio content at high
volume through personal audio
devices and being exposed to
loud sounds in nightclubs,
discotheques, bars or sporting
arenas harm one’s hearing.

Noise-induced hearing
loss is permanent
Over time listening to loud
sounds for prolonged duration
can lead to hearing loss, which
cannot be treated by medicines
or surgery.

In the United Kingdom,
the number of people exposed to
loud sounds in social settings has
tripled over a 20-year period.

In the United States, 40 million
people between the ages of 20-69
years are affected by
non-occupational noise-induced
hearing loss.

Make Listening Safe. Once you lose your hearing, it won’t come back!
Safe listening is possible

Hearing loss caused by loud sounds can be prevented through:

- **Raised awareness**
- **Safe technologies**
- **Sound policies**

Governments and manufacturers can halt the rise of hearing loss that results from engaging in practices that are harmful to hearing by:

- **Ensuring safe personal audio devices**
  - The World Health Organization and the International Telecommunication Union developed a global standard for safe listening devices which recommends safe listening features for personal audio devices. The standard advocates that these features should be made mandatory through government regulation. Manufacturers can also adopt this standard on a voluntary basis.

- **Promoting safe listening at entertainment venues**
  - Sound levels and sound distribution should be controlled at nightclubs, concerts, and similar venues.
  - People frequenting these venues should be provided earplugs, access to noise-free spaces and information on safe listening practices.

- **Increasing awareness**
  - Awareness campaigns should be disseminated to inform young people that safe listening is important for the continued enjoyment of music and other sounds.
  - Such campaigns should target the population at large, children and young adults, and parents and teachers.

Since 2007, organizers of events in Switzerland are obliged to monitor and notify the public of the levels of sound, display information about hearing damage risk, and distribute free earplugs, as per order of the Federal Office.

In 2009, the European Commission mandated that output levels in personal audio devices be set to a standard of 85 dB, with maximum output of 100 dB.

Dangerous Decibels, a public health campaign has been successful in improving listening practices among schoolchildren in different countries.

Make Listening Safe. Once you lose your hearing, it won't come back!