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Warning! Earphones are *not* Music to Your Ears

Hip-hop or Haydn, Stevie Wonder or Eminem... the message is not the issue, it's the messenger. Earphones - they're everywhere, on everyone, especially teenagers and young adults.

Portable music players like iPods, are ubiquitous. They contain all sorts of transportable digitized sounds - which if played loudly - have serious consequences.

Young people carry their earphones firmly in place while commuting to work, going to class, shopping or exercising. The cost of that listening pleasure could be much higher than just the cost of the music download.

"Many of these teenagers and twenty-somethings may not realize that their hearing is already damaged," says Dr. Carrie Adamson of Advanced Hearing Aid Center. "This has become a lifestyle issue, not just a matter of listening to music once in a while, but living for long periods of time with loud sounds directed into the ear canal".

According to studies done at Purdue University in Indiana recently, more and more young people are presenting to their Primary Care Physicians with "older ears on younger bodies". Studies have shown a disturbing trend of higher incidence of what is called: noise-induced hearing loss.

This problem has been increasing since the introduction of the Walkman a few years ago. Now, the iPod craze has taken the concern about the problem to new levels.

Dr. Adamson notes, "We are seeing a lot more patients in their 30's and 40's who suffer from tinnitus, which is ringing or buzzing sounds in the ears. Tinnitus can be caused by excessive exposure to noise or loud music."

What's even more scary, says Dr. Adamson, is that earphones are now being used to block out certain sounds, but the music substitute can be a lot more harmful than the sounds of traffic or even construction noise.

The advice: take a break from your headphones, use them infrequently and for shorter periods of time; and when you take them off and still hear the music playing – it's time to get your hearing examined.

Advanced Hearing Aid Center provides comprehensive hearing evaluations and hearing aid services. It has a staff of five including two Doctors of Audiology and a Board Certified Hearing Instrument Specialist.