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JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute

Save Your Hearing by Lowering Personal Stereo Volume

Edison, NJ—First it was Walkman's...now it's MP3 players. How many times have we walked by someone with a personal stereo system and can hear the music coming out of their earphones. "When people like music, they tend to turn up the volume, but they're doing themselves great harm when their music is loud," comments Virginia Gural-Toth, AuD, CCC/A (Supervising Licensee NJ Hearing Aid Dispenser #542), manager of JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute in Edison. Not only can loud music result in short term damage, there can be long term consequences for your hearing health.

"Most people are unaware that the volume of their music puts their hearing in danger. They just are focused on enjoying the music. The truth is, exposure to extremely loud sound from music concerts, stereos, and headphones can permanently damage one's hearing," says Gural-Toth. "Is that moment of enjoyment worth the price?"

Personal listening systems are an even greater concern. "When the volume is turned up, the damaging volume is being funneled directly into the persons ear through the headsets," explains Gural-Toth.

"Recognizing the significant risk of loud volumes is important. Permanent hearing loss can occur from prolonged or repeated exposure to sounds at 85 decibels or above."

Nearly 10 million Americans have hearing loss as a result of excess noise exposure, according to the American Speech-Language, and Hearing Association, numbers which appear to be increasing with the popularity of personal stereo systems

How do you know when the volume really is too loud? There are some simple benchmarks to consider.. If any of the following conditions are present, there's a good chance for damage to occur:

- If you have to raise your voice to be heard over the music
- If you can't hear someone less than two feet away from you

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- If speech around you sounds muffled or dull after leaving a loud environment
- If you have pain or ringing in your ears after exposure to the music

Gural-Toth recommends a proactive approach to one's hearing health which includes:

- Keep the volume down. Listen at 90 decibels for no more than 8 hours. Then treat your ears to a four hour break.
- Listen for less time. Less listening time with more breaks is a winning combination for your ears.
- Use over the ear headphones. New popular ear buds don't block out background noise. When you hear more noise, you turn the volume louder to hear over the noise.

In an effort to heighten awareness on the potential damage listening to loud music can have on hearing, and in honor of May being Better Hearing and Speech month, JRI will be hosting a workshop series for school age children called "Turn Down the Volume". The series is broken down into two programs focusing on the following topics: the hazards of loud noise, and music and hearing loss. The program is offered to local school

districts for children, from kindergarten through 12th grade. If you would like to inquire about JRI audiologists visiting your school for the above presentations, contact Virginia Gural-Toth at 732-321-7063 or by email at vtoth@solarishs.org.

Founded in 1974, The JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute is a major component of Solaris Health System, one of New Jersey's most comprehensive healthcare networks. The JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute headquartered at the JFK Medical Center in Edison is a comprehensive rehabilitative service provider focused on educating the community on rehabilitative health and helping adults and children with disabilities reach optimal function and independence. The Institute offers a complete array of inpatient and outpatient programs and services in rehabilitative health, including stroke, orthopedics, prosthetic and orthotics, electrodiagnosis, fitness, cardiac, women's health, pain management, pediatrics, speech pathology and audiology, industrial and vocational rehab, and brain injury rehabilitation programs and services. JRI includes a 94-bed inpatient center in Edison. Outpatient centers are located in Edison, Metuchen, Monroe, **-moreJFK**

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Old Bridge, and Plainfield. Affiliated with the JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute is the Shore Rehabilitation Institute, a 40-bed inpatient and outpatient comprehensive rehabilitation hospital located in Brick, NJ. The Rehab Medicine Department at JRI also serves as the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation for UMDNJ, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) for its Comprehensive Inpatient Rehabilitation, Brain Injury, and Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation programs. For more information on The JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute, call 732-321-7790 or visit the organization online at <http://www.njrehab.org>.

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