



## Headphones and Hearing Health

### Frequently Asked Questions

Hearing problems are increasing in the U.S., even among teenagers and young adults. In New York City, 10% of young adults report ringing in their ears or hearing loss.

#### Does listening to music with headphones cause hearing problems?

- Listening to loud music with headphones can increase your risk of tinnitus, or ringing in the ears, and hearing loss if you:
  - often listen to loud music, even for short periods
  - turn the volume up too high to drown out background noise
- Exposure to noisy environments or loud music can cause hearing loss. The effects of noise exposure build up over time and hearing problems can occur many years after exposure.

#### What can I do to protect my hearing when using headphones?

- Reduce the volume.
- Limit listening time.
- Take regular breaks.
- Never listen at the highest volume.

#### Do some headphones have features built in to protect my hearing?

Yes. The main types of headphones are:

- *In-ear headphones* are inserted into the opening of the ear. They form a seal that helps block outside sounds so you can listen to music at a lower volume.
- *Headphones* fit over the entire ear. Some use noise-cancellation technology to reduce outside noise.
- *Earbuds* are worn on the outer opening of the ear and often come with iPods, smart phones and MP3 players. They don't form a seal and may not keep out outside sounds.

#### What can I do to protect my hearing?

- Limit exposure to loud sounds.
- If you use headphones, use ones that cut down on outside noise.
- Wear earplugs or earmuffs in noisy areas.
- Stay alert to surroundings when wearing headphones or earplugs; never use headphones when biking, driving or crossing the street.



### How do I know if my hearing is damaged?

- Early signs of hearing loss include trouble hearing conversations, ringing in the ears, or needing to turn up the volume on audio devices.
- Talk with your doctor about a hearing test if you have any of these problems.