See our leaflet for our Resource Centres and Outreach Centres

Check out our range of leaflets or visit our website at www.deafhear.ie for further information

Head Office: 35 North Frederick Street, Dublin 1
Tel: (01) 817 5700
Minicom: (01) 817 5777
Fax: (01) 878 3629
Email: info@deafhear.ie
Text messages: (01) 878 3629

Leaflet ref: 13SG0208
Many people are concerned about the possibility of damage to hearing occurring because of the high output levels of personal music players, CD players and MP3 players. It is very difficult at present to be definite about the risks involved but research to date suggests that caution should be exercised in selecting both the volume of the music and the number of hours listening per week.

There is clear evidence that temporary dullness of hearing and tinnitus (ringing noises in the head) can follow the use of personal music players. These symptoms can sometimes take days to disappear and it is generally accepted that they should be treated as warnings that permanent damage could occur if the same listening habits continue over a period of years.

Measurements of the typical volume levels selected and the length of time for which people usually listen per week, normally indicate that some listeners exceed the levels of noise exposure which are considered to be acceptable in industry.

Comparing figures used to estimate the likelihood of workers sustaining a hearing loss, suggests that about one in 1500 listeners will suffer a permanent hearing loss of 30dB or more if they persist with their present listening habits for a period of ten years. Although this number may seem quite low, many more people will acquire a smaller loss, which will add to any loss acquired through other factors such as ageing.

Most headphones, etc., used with personal players are lightweight. They do not reduce the background noise level experienced by the wearer to any significant extent, so people generally have to select a higher volume when they listen in noisy conditions. The increased volume means that those who listen regularly in high levels of background noise will be more likely to damage their hearing.

It is not possible to prove that hearing damage inevitably follows the use of personal music players. However, unless people exercise caution with listening levels and exposure times, there is a definite risk that some permanent damage could occur.

Due to the increased portability of personal music players and the high incidence of listening to very loud music over a long number of years, it is expected that this generation will rewrite the hearing loss incidence statistics in the coming years.