

Health, Safety and Wellness for Musicians

Salisbury University – Fall 2017

Develop Healthy Practice Strategies During Your Undergraduate Years

Helpful Suggestions:

- Warm up before practice sessions – begin practices with moderate tempos that allow your body to warm up. Like athletes, you are at greater risk for pain and injuries to occur when your blood flow is still cold.
- Take frequent breaks – 5-minute rest breaks after every 30 minutes is a good rule. If you over practice one day, then go easier the next day. Use common sense as it takes muscles and soft tissues 48 hours to recover from exercise.
- Take mini breaks during practice and use this opportunity to sing or play small fragments that do not overtax the muscles.
- Stretching (when done properly) can alleviate playing/singing related tension.

The information below will outline musician-specific health and safety issues:

Hearing Health

Hearing health is essential to your lifelong success as a musician.

Noise-induced hearing loss is largely preventable. You must avoid overexposure to loud sounds, especially for long periods of time.

The closer you are to the source of a loud sound, the greater the risk of damage to your hearing mechanisms.

Sounds over 85 dB (your typical vacuum cleaner) in intensity pose the greatest risk to your hearing.

Risk of hearing loss is based on a combination of sound or loudness intensity and duration.

Recommended maximum daily exposure times (NIOSH) to sounds at or above 85 dB are as follows:

- 85 dB (vacuum cleaner, MP3 player at 1/3 volume) – 8 hours
- 90 dB (blender, hair dryer) – 2 hours
- 94 dB (MP3 player at 1/2 volume) – 1 hour
- 100 dB (MP3 player at full volume, lawnmower) – 15 minutes
- 110 dB (rock concert, power tools) – 2 minutes
- 120 dB (jet planes at takeoff) – without ear protection, sound damage is almost immediate

Certain behaviors (controlling volume levels in practice and rehearsal, avoiding noisy environments, turning down the volume) reduce your risk of hearing loss. Be mindful of those MP3 ear buds. See chart above. Take care when using earphones of excess volume.

The use of earplugs and earmuffs helps to protect your hearing health.

Day-to-day decisions can impact your hearing health, both now and in the future. Since sound exposure occurs in and out of school, you also need to learn more and take care of your own hearing health on a daily basis.

It is important to follow basic hearing health guidelines.

It is also important to study this issue and learn more.

Musculoskeletal and Vocal Health

Musicians use their bodies in specific and highly trained ways, and injuries can occur that can have lasting impact on performance ability. Performers need to be aware of vocal and musculoskeletal health issues that can affect them. Musicians at all levels of achievement can suffer from repetitive stress injuries, neuromuscular conditions or dystonias. It has been reported that 85% of freshman music majors in this country have complained about physical issues as a result of such things as misuse, repetitive motions, embouchure problems and improper techniques. Basic knowledge and awareness can help prevent problems now and in the future. No musician should go untreated if they are experiencing pain, numbness, tingling, tightness or incoordination.

Psychological Health

Musicians use their brains and it is important to keep a healthy brain that is well nurtured for peak practicing and performance. Musicians need to find ways to enhance their practicing through mental rehearsal and developing skills for peak performance. It is reported that 83% of college students majoring in music experience anxiety while performing. Basic information on stress management and care of the mind and body through progressive relaxation can reduce one's fear of performing and help achieve peak performances.

Environmental Health

It is important to find the best possible place and time to practice your instrument. A room that is

