

For Immediate Release

Naughty or nice? How to Santa-approve the worst gifts for your hearing

Dec. 17, 2010, Victoria, BC – With the majority of Canadians gaining a few pounds over the holiday season, it's no secret that these winter months are tough on the waistline. But, as Connect Hearing has found, Christmas can also be hard on another aspect of our health: hearing.

"From portable music players to rock concert tickets, a number of sound-producing gifts on the average wish list can be quite damaging to our hearing health," said MJ DeSousa, Director of Audiology at Connect Hearing. "But that's not to say we have to give and receive socks and underwear this year. With a bit of awareness, it's possible to indulge in a bit of frivolity while ensuring our ears are safe."

Although there isn't comprehensive Canadian research on noise-induced hearing loss, a recent US study found that 12 - 15 per cent of school-aged children have a degree of hearing deficiency due to noise exposure. Data from Statistics Canada indicates that 13 per cent of youth aged 14 and up have hearing disabilities, although there is no indication on cause.

With portable music players topping many Christmas lists, rocking out to Lady Gaga might seem like a fairly harmless activity. But studies have shown that prolonged exposure to noise of 85 dB and higher can damage the inner ear's hair cells, and potentially cause noise-induced hearing loss. And because most portable music players produce sounds in excess of 120 dB, about the same loudness as a jet engine, a few measures should be taken before slapping on the headphones.

"When using a personal music player, be aware of your surroundings – people have the tendency to turn up the volume in noisy environments, like on the bus, subway or airplane," said DeSousa. "Also, consider switching to over-the-ear headphones. Ear buds may direct more sound into the ear canals than headsets and can cause greater damage if the volume is too loud. If you're gifting this device to a child, it's not a bad idea to mark the safe volume level with a pen or pair it with output limited headphones."

While there's nothing more exciting than seeing your favourite rocker shred on the axe, your ears might think different. Whether gifting a friend or yourself, try to nab tickets near the centre of the stage and away from speakers. Since concert sound levels can reach in excess of 110 dB, consider packing along a pair of special earplugs designed to hear frequencies clearly, but at a safer volume. For frequent show-goers, contact Connect Hearing by calling at 1-800-563-4327 or visiting www.connecthearing.ca to learn more about a wide range of custom-fitted dB Blockers.

"The bad news is that noise-induced hearing loss is permanent," said DeSousa. "But, on the other hand, it's also 99 per cent preventable. Taking steps now will ensure healthy hearing for today and far into the future."

With a focus on hearing education and loss prevention, Connect Hearing has the largest network of registered audiologists and professional hearing instrument practitioners in Canada. Connect

Hearing offers a range of hearing assessments and solutions, customizing each client's experience to meet budget, need and lifestyle.

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About Connect Hearing

Connect Hearing is Canada's largest hearing company, with more than 130 clinics across Canada. Offering customers a full spectrum of hearing assessments and solutions for more than 30 years, Connect Hearing has grown from two Vancouver Island-based clinics into a national hearing company – always providing customers with exceptional service and value.

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