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AAP News

Ear, Nose & Throat Disorders, Parent Plus

'If I can hear it, it's too loud': Earbuds might be causing teen hearing loss

by Trisha Koriath, Staff Writer

Many parents will agree that their teens just don't listen. But what if it is because they can't hear?

Pediatricians have noticed that using earbuds or headphones might be damaging teens' hearing. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) wants to prevent this type of hearing loss and is recommending screening teens for hearing damage at higher tones to find out if they have high frequency hearing loss.

Kids expose themselves to noise through electronic media that often is louder than what is allowed by law in a workplace, according to Joseph F. Hagan Jr., M.D., FAAP, co-editor of the AAP *Bright Futures Guidelines*. "We know that does cause problems with high frequency hearing loss."

Kids should be screened at three ages: 11-14 years, 15-17 years and 18-21 years. The test includes having a patient listen for a series of beeps through headphones to determine whether the patient can hear a range of pitches.

One in six adolescents has high frequency hearing loss, according to a study. This type of hearing loss is caused by exposure to loud noises, such as music played through headphones.

The authors of another study were surprised to find that the sound of a balloon popping is louder than a shotgun being fired. Both are loud enough to cause hearing loss. They warned that hearing damage is similar to sun damage. Too much can cause harm over time.

Parents can help prevent hearing loss by teaching safe listening habits. Kids should take breaks after an hour of listening and turn the volume down to about 60% on their audio players. Youths should be able to hear conversations going on around them while listening to the music, according to the AAP (<http://bit.ly/2ktbcan>).

"What I tell my own patients is, 'If it hurts, there's a reason it hurts. Turn it down. If your ears feel funny afterwards, you had it on too loud,'" Dr. Hagan said. "As a dad, I used to say to my own kids, 'If I can hear it, it's too loud.'"

Find more hearing loss prevention tips at <http://bit.ly/2kifrmX>.