

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 acoustically treated or a living space that is quiet and conducive to practicing your instrument can prevent physical problems. Instrumentalists should be aware of proper seating while practicing and be in tune to the correct height of a bench, chair and/or music stand. Proper lighting is also vital.

PLEASE NOTE: As health concerns can vary widely depending on performance area, your primary source of information regarding performance health and injury prevention will be your applied music instructor. The Music Program will also host guest speakers and presenters to specifically address performance health, injury prevention, and treatment options. **If you are concerned about your health as a musician, or are experiencing discomfort in practice or performance, talk with a medical professional.**

Performance Health Resources

MUSC 318 - Wellness in Performance – a team-taught course - Pat Lamboni (athletic trainer), Dr. Bob McBrien (psychologist), Dr. Linda Cockey (pianist). Next offering is Spring 2019.

Barbara Conable. (2000) *What Every Musician Needs to Know About the Body: The Practical Application of Body Mapping to Making Music*, Andover Press.

William J. Dawson. (2008) *Fit as a Fiddle: The Musician's Guide to Playing Healthy*, Rowman and Littlefield/MENC.

Rachel Gates, L. Arick Forrest and Kerrie Obert. (2013) *The Owner's Manual to the Voice: A Guide for Singers and Other Professional Voice Users*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. www.oup.com

Janet Horvath (2010) *Playing Less Hurt: An Injury Prevention Guide for Musicians*. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard. <http://playinglesshurt.com>

- Anthony Jahn, M.D., et al (2013) *The Singer's Guide to Complete Health*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. www.oup.com
- Gerald Klickstein. (2009) *The Musician's Way: A Guide to Practice, Performance and Wellness*. New York: Oxford University Press. www.oup.com **Newsletter** - www.musiciansway.com/
- Jaume Rosset i Llobet and George Odam. (2007) *The Musician's Body: A Maintenance Manual for Peak Performance*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company. www.ashgate.com
- Lesley Sisterhen McAllister. (2013) *The Balanced Musician: Integrating Mind and Body for Peak Performance*. Scarecrow Press, Inc. www.rowman.com
- Julie Jaffee Nagel. (2017) *Managing Stage Fright: A Guide for Musicians and Music Teachers*. Oxford University Press. www.oup.com

Helpful Websites and Blogs

-College Music Society Webinars:

https://symposium.music.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&task=user&id=2478:cmswebinars&Itemid=126

-NASM - *The National Association of Schools of Music* – listing of musicians' health advisories in the areas of neuromusculoskeletal health, vocal and mental health and hearing preservation
<http://nasm.arts-accredit.org/index.jsp?page=NASM-PAMA%3A+Neuromusculoskeletal+and+Vocal+Health>

-*Athletes and the Arts* – An organization whose initiative is to integrate the science of sport and the performing arts via collaboration of several organizations including PAMA. One-page fact sheets and videos are available at: <http://athletesandthearts.com>

-*The Bulletproof Musician* – website by performance psychologist/violinist Noa Kageyama. Teaches musicians how to overcome stage fright www.bulletproofmusician.com

-*Changing Performance Anxiety into Performance Energy*. Website/blog by Julie Nagel, psychotherapist and pianist www.julienagel.net

- *Mapping Music* - Rebecca Shockley: memorymapformusic.org

-*The Musician's Brain* – Blog by pianist Lois Svard. Explores brain science and how it relates to teaching and performing www.themusiciansbrain.com

-*Performing Arts Medical Association (PAMA)*: <http://www.artsmed.org>

-*Hearing Protection*: <http://www.etymotic.com/>

-*The Singer's Resource* - www.thesingersresource.com/vocal_health.htm

-YouTube.com – *Health and Wellness Seminar Series: Putting it All Together* - Serap Bastepe-Gray: Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University -

https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=YK_NxxD5bbM

The Department's website under student information:

<http://www.salisbury.edu/musicdept/studentinfo.html>

NOTE: Health and safety depend in large part on the personal decisions of informed individuals. Institutions have health and safety responsibilities, but fulfillment of these responsibilities can and will not ensure any specific individual's health and safety. Too many factors beyond any institution's control are involved. Individuals have a critically important role and each is personally responsible for avoiding risk and preventing injuries to themselves before, during, and after study at any institution. The information above does not alter or cancel any individual's personal responsibility, or in any way shift personal responsibility for the results of any individual's personal decisions or actions in any instance or over time to any institution.

@Dr. Linda Cockey, August 2017