Health, Safety and Wellness for the Music Student
Department of Music – Salisbury University – Fall 2014

The primary factor in your health and safety is YOU. Be responsible, make good choices and be informed. The information below will outline musician-specific health and safety issues as you prepare for your career in music.

**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 earbuds. 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. The National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) and the Performing Arts Medical Association (PAMA) provide advisories and other information on the web.

**Musculoskeletal 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 Department of Music 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**
**Department of Music Course:**
MUSC 318 - Wellness in Performance – a team-taught course - Pat Lamboni (athletic trainer), Dr. Bob McBrien (psychologist), Dr. Linda Cockey, (pianist). Offered every other year during the spring semester – next offering is Spring 2015.

**Materials in the University Library:**
**Newsletter** - [www.musiciansway.com](http://www.musiciansway.com/)

**Some Helpful Websites:**
Andover Educators (body mapping): http://bodymap.org
Dalcroze Society of America: http://www.dalcrozeusa.org
The Feldenkrais Method: http://www.feldenkrais.com
Performing Arts Medical Association: http://www.artsmed.org
Hearing Protection: http://www.etymotic.com/

The Department’s website under student information: http://www.salisbury.edu/musicdept/studentinfo.html also provides NASM and PAMA’s information for students and there is additional information on this site as well.

If you are concerned about your personal hearing health, talk with a medical professional.
Excerpted from: “Protecting Your Hearing Health: Student Information Sheet on Noise-Induced Hearing Loss” NASM/PAMA: November 2011

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, January 2014