



NATIONAL DRUG AND
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CLUBBING YOURSELF TO DEAF: RESEARCH REVEALS HUGE RISK OF HEARING LOSS AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

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Major international research, to be presented today at the first national Club Health conference to be held in Australia shows that three out of four young people (73%) who go to clubs or concerts regularly are risking permanent hearing damage.

The findings will be presented at Club Health 2005: Sydney held at the Rydges Jamison Hotel, Sydney.

The Royal National Institute of the Deaf (RNID) - the UK's largest charity representing nine million deaf and hard of hearing people - found that of the two thirds (66%) of young people who regularly go clubbing, three quarters of them regularly experience ringing in their ears and / or dullness of hearing after a night out – a warning sign of hearing damage.

The research also shows that whilst almost half of young people (46%) know that the ringing in their ears after a night out is a sign of damage, many (59%) aren't aware this damage is irreversible.

“Social noise exposure has tripled since the early 1980s in the UK meaning that it is now even more important for people to take steps to look after their hearing. Prevention is always better than cure, especially in this case as there is no remedy for hearing damage.

“We need to get to a stage where remembering to take your ear plugs out with you on a big night out is as common-place as remembering safe sex protection.

“If we don't, we are roller coasting towards an epidemic of premature hearing loss in middle age,” comments Lisa McDonald, Campaigns Officer from the RNID who will be presenting the paper.

The research has prompted RNID to launch a major campaign - Don't Lose the Music – targeted at clubbers, students and festivalgoers. It aims to encourage young people to adopt a 'safe listening' approach by getting them to:

- take regular breaks from the dance floor in nightclubs and use club chill out areas to give ears a rest from loud music
- stand away from loud speakers when in clubs or at gigs and concerts
- wear ear plugs if regularly exposed to loud music, ie as a frequent clubber, DJ or musician.

RNID is also calling on the music industry to:

- ensure speakers in night clubs are placed safely and take into account the potential hearing damage that could be caused by badly designed clubs when designing new venues
- offer more 'chill out' space for clubbers so that they are able to take breaks from loud music
- encourage professional DJs – many of whom already wear protective ear plugs – to act as role models and encourage young people to protect their hearing.

Paul Dillon, one of the organisers of the Club Health 2005: Sydney, said that clubbing and hearing loss is an area which has previously been ignored in Australia.

'The Club Health conference is hoping to highlight a range of issues which affect those people who enjoy clubbing. Too often the focus is on illicit drugs alone, instead of the myriad of other health issues that may arise among this group.'

"Clubbers, like everyone else need to look after their hearing. Hearing is like any other sense: your brain compensates for loss, until one day you realise that you can't hear properly. Too many of our young people are losing their hearing unnecessarily when all it would take are a few precautions to ensure their safety."

Club Health 2005: Sydney will be held from 29-30 September 2005 at the Rydges Jamison Sydney.

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