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### Safely Using Headphones and Earbuds

People often listen to sound from their computers or mobile devices through headphones or earbuds. Headphones cover or are placed outside of the ear, whereas earbuds rest inside the ear canal. With these listening devices, only the individual wearing the device hears the sound. Using headphones or earbuds improperly can lead to permanent hearing loss. Items that may protect hearing include quality of these devices and volume levels.

The features of certain headphones and earbuds can help to prevent hearing loss. Higher-quality headphones and earbuds tend to produce a clearer sound, enabling wearers to listen at a lower volume (Tu). Properly designed headphones should have a close fit for optimal listening. Similarly, earbuds should seal tightly in the ear canal of the person wearing the device. Headphones and earbuds also should include noise-cancelling technology.<sup>1</sup>

The volume level of the sound that transmits from headphones or earbuds into the ear of a person wearing this type of device has been linked to hearing loss. The volume should be set low enough that other people nearby cannot hear the sound being transmitted. The quieter the sounds, the less possibility of hearing damage. Further, listening at a higher volume for extended periods

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<sup>1</sup> Gupta and Padro state that effective noise-cancelling technology reduces the interference of sounds from the surrounding environment, reducing the volume level required by headphones and earbuds (75-78).

of time could be unsafe. One expert suggests people should listen at only 30 percent maximum volume (Chamberlain).

More and more people are using headphones and earbuds with their computers and mobile devices. Using high-quality listening devices and lowering the volume can help to minimize potential hearing loss from the use of headphones and earbuds.

Works Cited

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