Summer Safe Listening:
How to Help Kids Protect Their Hearing When Using Earbuds and Headphones

With children across the country gearing up for summer break, parents and caregivers should be aware of seasonal hearing hazards that could put children at risk for noise-induced hearing loss.

One of the biggest concerns is unsafe listening to personal audio devices such a music players, tablets, and smartphones. The risk during summer has always been heightened since children have more leisure time on their hands. But this is especially true now, after a year when many students spent 6 or more hours each day using devices on virtual school alone.

Here's what parents should know about noisy technology and safe listening:

Volume + Duration: Noise-induced hearing loss can occur when children listen at **too-loud volumes, for too long**. This damage can build over time.

How loud is too loud? How long is too long? Many earbuds, headphones, and devices have volume output levels of 100 decibels or higher. This is well beyond what is considered safe. The World Health Organization recommends that children spend **no more than 40 hours** listening to a personal audio device per week, at levels **no higher than 75 decibels**, to prevent hearing damage. Even many "kid-safe" headphones go up to 85 or 90 decibels.

ASHA recommends these tips for parents:

- **Talk to your child about the importance of hearing protection**. Help them appreciate that their hearing is something they enjoy and should value—because it can be damaged.
- **Have children take hourly listening breaks**. Even a few minutes of quiet makes a difference for hearing health.
- **Use volume limiters on devices, if the option is available**. If this isn't possible, keep volume level at no higher than half.
- **Consider investing in noise-cancelling headphones**. This helps prevent the urge—and need—for kids to crank the volume.
- **Provide ample "device-free" time for summer activities**. This benefits not only the ears—but so much more!
- **Model safe listening for children and teens**. "Practice what you preach" when it comes to keeping the volume down. You'll protect your hearing, too, while setting a good example.

Learn more at **www.communicationandtech.org**.