

Health and Safety Recommendations for students for the Concordia College Department of Music

The Concordia College Department of Music has developed policies, protocols, and operational procedures to guard against injury and illness in the study and practice of music, as well as to raise the awareness among our students and faculty of the connections between musicians' health, the suitability and safety of equipment and technology, and the acoustic and other health-related conditions in the practice, rehearsal, and performance facilities.

It is important to note that health and safety depends largely on personal decisions made by informed individuals. Concordia College has health and safety responsibilities, but fulfillment of these responsibilities cannot and will not ensure any individual's health and safety. Too many factors beyond the college's control are involved.

Each individual is personally responsible for avoiding risk and preventing injuries to themselves before, during, and after study or employment in the Concordia College Department of Music. The policies, protocols, and operational procedures developed by the Department of Music do not alter or cancel any individual's personal responsibility, or in any way shift personal responsibility for the result of any individual's personal decisions or actions to the College.

Performance Injuries

Anyone who practices, rehearses or performs instrumental or vocal music has the potential to suffer injury related to that activity. Instrumental musicians are at risk for repetitive motion injuries. Sizable percentages of them develop physical problems related to playing their instruments; and if they are also computer users, their risks are compounded. Instrumental injuries often include carpal tunnel syndrome, tendinitis, and bursitis. Incorrect posture, non-ergonomic technique, excessive force, overuse, stress, and insufficient rest contribute to chronic injuries that can cause great pain, disability, and the end of careers.

What Instrumentalists Should Do

1. Maintain good general health. Exercise regularly, eat a balanced diet, and get adequate rest to minimize fatigue.
2. Evaluate your technique. Reduce force, keep joints in the middle of their range of motion, use large muscle groups when possible, and avoid fixed, tense positions.
3. Always warm up. As an athlete would not begin a vigorous physical activity without warming up, a musician must warm up carefully before practice or performance.
4. Take breaks to stretch and relax. Take short breaks every few minutes and longer breaks each hour. Two or more shorter rehearsals each day are more productive than marathon single sessions. Even in performance, find those opportunities to relax a hand, arm, or embouchure to restore circulation.

5. Pace yourself. No pain, no gain is a potentially catastrophic philosophy for a musician. Know when enough is enough, and learn to say 'no' to certain performances or lengths of performing that might result in injury.
6. Check out your instrument. Does your instrument place undue stress on your body? Is your instrument set up optimally for you to relieve pressure on hands, joints, etc.? Is there a strap, carrier, or stand available to relieve the stress?
7. Evaluate other activities. Pains and injuries affecting your music making could be caused by other activities in your daily life. Computer use is notorious for causing afflictions including carpal tunnel syndrome and tendinitis.
8. Pay attention to your body. Pain is the mechanism by which your body tells you that something is wrong. Listen to your body; if it hurts, stop what you are doing.
9. Get medical attention. Do not delay in seeing a doctor. A physician may prescribe a minor adjustment or, in worst-case scenarios, stipulate not performing for a period of time. As drastic as this may sound, a few months of rest is better than suffering a permanent, career ending injury.

What Vocalists Should Do

1. Maintain good general health. Exercise regularly, eat a balanced diet, and get adequate rest to minimize fatigue. If you do become ill, avoid "talking over your laryngitis" – see your physician and rest your voice.
2. Maintain body hydration; drink two quarts of water daily.
3. Limit the use of your voice. If necessary, use amplification for vocal projection.
4. Avoid throat clearing, voiced coughing, yelling, and hard vocal attacks on initial vowel words.
5. Adjust the speaking pitch level of your voice. Use the pitch level in the same range where you say, "Umm-hmm?"
6. Speak in phrases rather than in paragraphs. Breathe slightly before each phrase and reduce the demands on your voice – don't do all the talking!
7. Learn to breathe silently to activate your breath support muscles and reduce neck tension.
8. Water and Air! Take full advantage of these two free elements of vocal fold healing.
9. Vocal athletes must treat their musculoskeletal system as do other types of athletes; therefore, vocal warm-ups should always be used prior to singing. Vocal cool-downs are also essential to keep the singing voice healthy.
10. Get medical attention. Do not delay in seeing a doctor. A physician may prescribe a minor adjustment or, in worst-case scenarios, stipulate not performing for a period of time. As drastic as this may sound, a few months of rest is better than suffering a permanent, career ending injury. Likewise, the demands placed on singers' voices are immense. Hardly a month goes by where a top singer is not forced to interrupt a tour, take a break, or undergo a medical procedure due to problems with their voice. Medical professionals are making the case that the demands put on one's voice when singing one to three hours is as intense as those made on an Olympic marathon runner's body. Additional factors such as nutrition, smoking, drug use, noisy environments, and proper voice training (or the lack of it) all play a role in a singer's ability to perform at her/his best.

What All Musicians Should Do

1. Stay informed. Awareness is the key. Like many health-related issues, prevention is much easier and less expensive than cures. Take time to read available information concerning injuries associated with your art.

2. **Helpful books:**

Conable, Barbara. *What Every Musician Needs to Know About the Body* (GIA Publications, 2000)

Klickstein, Gerald. *The Musician's Way: A Guide to Practice, Performance, and Wellness* (Oxford, 2009)

Norris, Richard N. *The Musician's Survival Manual* (International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians, 1993)

3. **Helpful Links:**

Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM), the world's leading authority on musical assessment, actively supporting and encouraging music learning.

Performing Arts Medicine Association (PAMA), an organization comprised of dedicated medical professionals, artists educators, and administrators with the common goal of improving the health care of the performing artist.

Texas Voice Center, founded in 1989 for the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of voice disorders.

National Center for Voice and Speech (NCVS), conducts research, educates vocalists, and disseminates information about voice and speech.

Vocal Health Center, University of Michigan Health System, recognized locally, regionally and nationally as a leading institution for the treatment and prevention of voice disorders. At the heart of the Center is a professional team comprised of experts from the University of Michigan Health System and U-M School of Music, encompassing the fields of Laryngology, Speech Pathology, and Vocal Arts.

School-Owned Instruments

The Department of Music maintains a collection of musical instruments for checkout and use by members of the music faculty and students enrolled in our courses and performing ensembles. As with other items we use in the course of our daily lives, musical instruments must be cared for properly and cleaned regularly. Each instrument in the Department's collection receives a thorough inspection at the conclusion of the academic year. Every year, thousands of dollars are spent to clean, adjust, and return instruments to full playing condition.

Antiseptically Clean

More and more our society is pushing for products that are anti-fungal, anti-bacterial and anti-viral – at times aiming to achieve sterility. However, our bodies by design are not meant to live in a sterile environment. As kids we played in the dirt, ate bugs and countless other things and became stronger because of it. Keep in mind that total sterility is a fleeting moment. Once a sterile instrument has been handled or exposed to room air it

is no longer considered to be sterile. It will however remain antiseptically clean until used.

Most viruses cannot live on hard surfaces for a prolonged period of time. Some die simply with exposure to the air. However, certain groups are quite hardy. Therefore, musicians must be concerned with instrument hygiene. Users of department owned and rented musical equipment might be more susceptible to infections from instruments that are not cleaned and maintained properly. If the cleaning process is thorough, however, musical instruments will be antiseptically clean. Just as with the utensils you eat with, soap and water can clean off anything harmful. Antibacterial soaps will kill certain germs but all soaps will carry away the germs that stick to dirt and oils while they clean. No germs/ no threat.

Infectious Disease Risks

Sharing musical instruments is a widespread, accepted practice in the profession. However, recent discussion in the profession has included concern regarding shared musical instruments and infectious disease, especially HIV.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has confirmed that there is no risk of transmission of HIV (the virus that causes AIDS), or Hepatitis B (HBV) through shared musical instruments. The reasons for this are that these diseases are passed via a blood-to-blood, sexual fluid or mucous membrane contact. There has been no case of saliva transmission of HIV (the virus that causes AIDS), or Hepatitis B (HBV).

Instrument Hygiene

While the possibility of transmission of the above bacteria and viruses is not a real consideration, it is apparent that there should be a protocol with regard to shared musical instruments. Sharing of instruments is routine in music schools, where students practice and perform on borrowed instruments throughout the year. Certain basic considerations and recommendations for standard operating procedures regarding shared instruments are recommended as follows:

1. All musicians or students should have their own instrument if possible.
2. All musicians or students should have their own mouthpiece if possible.
3. All students and faculty sharing reed instruments MUST have their own individual reeds. Reeds should NEVER be shared.
4. If instruments must be shared in class, alcohol wipes or Sterisol germicide solution should be available for use between different people. When renting or using a school-owned musical instrument, each user must understand that regular cleaning of these musical instruments is required in order to practice proper hygiene.

Basic Lifelong Hearing Protection for Musicians

Exposure to loud noise is the second most common cause of hearing loss. Approximately 30 million Americans are exposed to high intensity noise in their workplace. 1 in 4 of these workers (or 7.5 million Americans) will develop a permanent hearing loss. *Much can be done to prevent noise-induced hearing loss but little can be done to reverse it.*

Loud noise damages the hair cells in the inner ear and can cause hearing loss, ear ringing, and distortion of sounds. This damage CANNOT be repaired.

In a profession where hearing is a vital aspect of our everyday success, musicians must take special care of our hearing. Many factors contribute to the loudness musicians experience during our performance and practice time: size of the room, height of the ceiling, instrument range/tessitura, volume of sound production, etc. As you are practicing, performing off-campus, and in your general music listening, be conscious of how loud the sound is and make adjustments to minimize impact on your hearing. Over time, sounds above the 85 decibel (dB) threshold pose a potential threat to your hearing!

Sample sound levels:

Normal piano	60-70 dB	Piano Fortissimo	84-103dB
Fortissimo Vocalist	70dB	Chamber music, sm space	75-85dB
Violin	82-92dB	Cello	85-111dB
Flute	92-103dB	Piccolo	90-106dB
Clarinet	85-114dB	Oboe	95-112dB
French Horn	90-106dB	Trombone	85-114dB
Tympani/Bass Drum	106dB	Symphonic music peak	120-137dB
Earbuds on 5/10	94dB	Rock music peak	150dB

Recommendations and simple ways to reduce your risk of hearing loss:

1. When possible, avoid situations that put your hearing health at risk.
2. The extent of hearing damage is related to the length and frequency of a person's exposure to loud sounds over long periods of time.
3. If you're planning to be in a noisy environment for any significant amount of time, try to maintain a reasonable distance from the source of the sound or music. The closer you are to the source of a loud noise, the greater risk that you'll experience some damage to your hearing.
4. When attending loud concerts, be mindful of the location of your seats. Try to avoid sitting or standing too close to the stage or to the speakers, and use earplugs.
5. Keep the volume of your music and MP3 player at a safe level.
6. Remember to take breaks during a rehearsal in a practice room. Your ears will appreciate this quiet time.
7. Use earplugs or other protective devices in noisy environments and when using noisy equipment.
8. Be mindful of the overall volume of your instrument and of those around you in a rehearsal.

Faculty, staff and students are encouraged to download one of the following apps:

For PC's/Androids: Sound Meter/Noise detector dB
SPL/dB Volume Levels
For Mac's/iPhones: Decibel 10th
Decibel Meter pro

Information and Research Hearing Health Project Partners

National Association of School of Music (NASM) <http://nasm.arts-accredit.org>

Performing Arts Medicine Association (PAMA) <http://www.artsmed.org/index.html>

General Information on Acoustics

Acoustical Society of America (<http://acousticalsociety.org>)

Acoustics.com (<http://www.acoustics.com>)

Acoustics for Performance, Rehearsal, and Practice Facilities available through the NASM website. (<http://nasm.arts-accredit.org>)

Health and Safety Standards Organizations American National Standards Institute (ANSI) (<http://www.ansi.org>)

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) (<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh>)

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) (<http://www.osha.gov>)

Medical Organizations Focused on Hearing Health American Academy of Audiology (<http://www.audiology.org/Pages/default.aspx>)

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) (<http://www.asha.org>)

Athletes and the Arts (<http://athletesandthearts.com>)

National Hearing Conservation Association (<http://www.hearingconservation.org>)

Concordia College Information on Health Concerns:

www.concordiacollege.edu/student-life/student-services-resources/health-wellness/