

Wartburg College
Music Department

Music Health and Safety Statement

The Music Department of Wartburg College is required by its accrediting body, the National Association of Schools of Music, to provide a written statement outlining standards regarding health and safety for Faculty, Staff and students. This includes information on vocal health, injury prevention, musculoskeletal health, hearing loss and protection, and the proper procedures for using departmental equipment and technology.

The Music Department continues to evaluate its standards on health and safety and will continue to update its policy as new standards are developed and new information becomes available. It is important to note that regardless of the health and safety policies of the Music Department of Wartburg College, or the policies of the College itself, it is the responsibility of the individual to guard against illness and injury. In addition, each student is responsible for avoiding risk and preventing injuries to themselves.

The Wartburg College Music Department policy regarding Health and Safety is organized in the following four categories: Hearing Health, Vocal Health, Musculoskeletal Health, and Hygiene. Important web links are provided at the end of each section.

Hearing Health.

Hearing health is of the utmost importance to musicians. Your hearing can be permanently damaged by loud sounds of any kind and it is important to safeguard yourself against prolonged loud noise exposure. Something as simple as listening to music through ear buds at high volume can cause permanent hearing damage.

Noise Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL) is a well-studied and preventable form of hearing loss. 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 in intensity (a typical vacuum cleaner) pose great risk to your hearing. Risk of hearing loss is based upon a combination of loudness intensity and duration.

Recommended maximum daily exposure times to sounds over 85 dB are as follows:

- 85 dB (vacuum cleaner, MP3 player at 1/3 volume) – 8 hours
- 90 dB (hair dryer) – 2 hours
- 94 dB (MP3 player at 1/2 volume) – 1 hour
- 100 dB (lawnmower, MP3 player at full volume) – 15 minutes

- 110 dB (power tools, rock concert) – 2 minutes
- 120 dB (jet engine at takeoff) without ear protection, damage is immediate

Certain behaviors (controlling volume levels in practice and rehearsal, avoiding noisy environments, turning down the volume, and wearing ear protection) reduce your risk of hearing loss.

For more information about hearing health, please visit the following websites:

American Tinnitus Association www.ata.org

Hearing Education and Awareness for Rockers www.hearnet.com

OSHA: Hearing Conservation www.osha.gov/Publications/osha3074.pdf

Sensaphonics Hearing Conservation, Inc. www.sensaphonics.com

Vocal Health

A key part to a healthy voice is a healthy body. Singers are encouraged to exercise regularly to help promote overall well being. Proper hydration, nutrition, and sleep are also important. Health guidelines suggest that each person should drink a minimum of 64 ounces of water each day and avoid soft drinks, alcohol, and caffeine. It is also important for singers to avoid illness. Simply washing your hands regularly can go a long way towards preventing illness.

A comprehensive warm-up routine is also very important for singers. Consult with your applied instructor to determine what is best for your voice. Practice regularly to develop vocal stamina that meets the demands of your singing workload.

A few rules to preventing vocal abuse:

- Don't smoke!
- Avoid dry, artificial interior climates and breathing smoggy, polluted air.
- Avoid throat clearing and voiced coughing.
- Stop yelling – avoid calling from room to room.
- Avoid hard vocal attacks on initial vowel words.
- Reduce demands on your voice – don't do all the talking.
- Avoid certain medications that contain pseudoephedrine as they can contribute to dehydration.
- Stop singing when your voice is tired. If you still have work to finish then "mark" your rehearsals. Do not put continued stress on already exhausted vocal chords.

For more information about vocal health, please visit the following websites:

The Voice Foundation www.voicefoundation.org

National Center for Voice and Speech www.ncvs.org

The Voice Doctor www.voicedoctor.net
Singing for a Living www.singingforaliving.com

Musculoskeletal Health

There are numerous musculoskeletal injuries that can be associated with playing a musical instrument. Most are caused by poor posture, repetitive strain, overuse and incorrect playing positions of the body, legs, arms, etc. While musculoskeletal injuries can be rare, it is important that you consult a doctor if you are experiencing unusual pain or discomfort when playing your instrument. "Playing through" a musculoskeletal pain can potentially lead to serious injury.

The following are some common injuries experienced by instrumentalists:¹

- Carpal Tunnel Syndrome: characterized by a tingling sensation or numbness of the thumb, index and middle finger.
- Tendinitis: inflammation or irritation of the tendons due to overuse or wrong posture/position.
- Bursitis: inflammation or irritation of tendons, muscles or skin.
- Quervain's Tenosynovitis: characterized by pain on the inside of the wrist and forearm.
- Thoracic Outlet Syndrome: may be either neurological or vascular; characterized by pain, swelling or puffiness in the arms and hands, neck and shoulder pains, muscle weakness, difficulty gripping objects, muscle cramps and tingling or numbness in the neck and shoulders.
- Cubital Tunnel Syndrome: pain in the upper extremity such as the arm and elbow.

Always remember:

- Make sure you warm-up properly.
- Observe proper posture.
- Evaluate your technique and performance habits..
- Listen to your body.
- If in doubt, consult a doctor.

For more information about musculoskeletal health, please visit the following websites:

American Physical Therapy Association www.apta.org
Move Well and Avoid Injury www.movewellandavoidinjury.com
Alexander Technique www.alexandertechnique.com
Feldenkrais Method www.feldenkrais.com

¹ From musiced.about.com

Hygiene

Practicing correct instrument hygiene is important to ward off the spread of illness and to protect the well being of the student. While it is not common for students to “share” instruments during a given semester, all school-owned instruments are available to students for use in methods and ensembles. You can be guaranteed that several people have played your school instrument before you have.

Keeping mouthpieces clean, properly swabbing instruments, and not sharing reeds are all common sense practices. If you are using a school owned instrument for an ensemble, it is strongly recommended that you purchase your own mouthpiece and keep it and your reeds separate from the instrument. If you must share an instrument, then it is recommended that you use alcohol wipes or Sterisol germicide solution before you play the instrument.

For more information about hygiene, please visit the following websites:

Irish Dentist http://www.irishdentist.ie/news/news_detail.php?id=3807

Healthy Musicians Workshop www.healthymusiciansworkshop.com

The Performing Arts Medical Association www.artsmed.org