

## iPods and hearing loss; unhealthy school lunches

Written by PHILIP S. CHUA, M.D., FACS, FPCS  
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THERE are about 250 million iPod users in the United States alone.

There is now a convincing body of medical evidence that this little gadget that brings fabulous music to almost all our senses through earbuds can damage hearing.

The most common victims who are harmed are teenagers, as can be expected, because they are the ones who use most of the iPods in the world.

While listening to music through earbuds for an hour and a half at 80 percent of the volume each day may be tolerated long term, softer volume is safer.

If lowered to 70 percent, the safe listening range could be extended to four-and-a-half hours per day.

When listening at full volume (115 decibels), the safe range is reduced to just five minutes a

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day!

Apple has now considered lowering the maximum volume to 100 decibels, roughly the volume of a pneumatic drill.

Guys and dolls, if you can (still) hear me, please turn the volume on your iPod down to a safe level before you lose your hearing earlier than your grandparents.

### **Unhealthy school lunches**

Children in the United States in the 1950s were fed unhealthy lunches of high-fat, high-cholesterol foods, consisting of ice cream, whole milk, mashed potatoes, pot roast, etc., with about 33 grams of fat, almost 1,000 calories, and about 1,300 mg of sodium (salt).

Today, six decades later, school lunches in many schools are lacking in vegetables, still loaded with carbohydrates and fats, 2 percent milk, canned fruits, processed meats, with about 45 grams of fats and about 1,200 calories, with almost twice the sodium.

Healthier for our children are diets higher in vegetables, especially the green leafy varieties, lentils (beans, etc.), whole grain, nuts and some fresh fruits, 1 percent milk, and fish, turkey or chicken (minus the skin) for meat, about 650 calories, 25 grams of fat, and only about 1,300 mg or less salt.

Healthy habits during childhood lead to healthier adults, and healthier adults translates to a healthier nation.

It behooves the power-that-be not only to educate the school children about the academics but to guide and protect them and their health as well, because the food they eat will determine their future and the future of our nation.

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### **Food as medicine**

Hippocrates, a Greek physician and the Father of Western Medicine (circa 460 BC), once stated “Let food be thy medicine and let thy medicine be food.”

Today, that statement is more self-evident and more relevant as ever.

“There is an overwhelming strong database suggesting that the quality of calories we eat has a huge impact on our well-being and our risk of chronic disease,” according to Dr. David Ludwig, director of the Optimal Weight for Life Program at Children’s Hospital in Boston.

There is no question that a diet of fish, vegetables, tofu, lentils, whole grains, nuts and some fruits, is a lot healthier than one consisting of red meats (especially processed meats) and high carbohydrates (flour bread, white rice, ice cream, pies and other sweets, and soft drinks).

Healthy diets prevent diseases, like diabetes, high blood pressure, arthritis, Alzheimer’s, heart attack, stroke and even cancer.

### **Working off calories**

Do you know what it takes for a 30-year-old woman who is about 154 pounds to burn off a 360-calorie blueberry muffin or any 360-calorie food item?

To work off those calories, this individual needs to do one of the following: gardening for 66 minutes, skating for 21 minutes, lifting weight for 115 minutes, lawn mowing for 66 minutes, bicycling for 77 minutes, vacuuming for 92 minutes, folding laundry for 230 minutes, or jogging for 33 minutes.

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And that's only for a muffin!

Imagine what we need to do to burn off 1,800 calories or more we eat each day.

Aristotle divided the living world into animals and plants.

Animals, like man, was created to be active, not to vegetate, like plants.

But some vegetate and move only our fingers, for the remote control, and our mastication muscles as we munch on junk foods on the couch viewing the television.

Diet and exercise are good and effective with each other, and less beneficial without the other.

So, let us not vegetate; let us be active and do daily exercise as we eat a healthy diet.

### **Kidney for sale**

Some financially-strapped people, especially in developing countries, sell their kidney to make a buck.

With two kidneys, these organ vendors, feel they can afford to sell one of them.

So long as the remaining kidney is healthy and not damaged later, these individuals may be safe.

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Of course, they lose their potential back-up kidney, which is security minus 50 percent.

The black-market kidney business accounts for about 5 percent to 10 percent of the global kidney transplants, per estimate of the World Health Organization.

A kidney can be sold for \$6,000 in Iran, where the practice is legal, and the cost is about half in India.

In the Philippines, a new law prohibits sale and transplantation of commercial kidneys.

### **Retail DNA test**

Genetics is a fascinating field, and our profit-oriented society takes advantage of every opportunity for financial gains.

A company called 23andMe, co-founded by Ann Wojcicki, wife of Sergey Brin, co-founder of Google, can perform a saliva test for \$399 to uncover some genetic traits that could reveal important health data of the person.

Sergey, for instance, knows he has 20 percent to 80 percent chance of having Parkinson's disease, besides the 90 medical conditions he has or will have as he grows older, "from baldness to blindness and beyond."

All this from a no-needle, painless, saliva test.

The 23andMe started in 2007 and offers the most accessible and affordable commercial genetic

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test, with the ability to analyze 600,000 genetic markers, which Ann calls “the digital manifestation of you.”

Forewarned, a potential breast, prostate or other organ cancer victim can be more aware and careful of his habits and behavior.

If one knows in advance that Alzheimer’s will most likely afflict him/her, proactive measures can be taken to slow down the progression of the ailment.

This is one of the advantages of knowing future conditions or ailments that will come your way as years go by.

This is where a more aggressive preventive strategy and discipline can yield dividends, knowing in advance the “target (potential) enemy.”

Like any new discoveries, this genetic testing brings in the very sensitive privacy and security issues.

Does one want a future employer to know that the job-seeker is prone to develop mental illness or a form of cancer, or any medical condition that could cost the company a lot of health-care related financial burden?

How about the information reaching one’s friends and family, or a future spouse?

Or, the whole community where the person lives?

Or, in the case of those running for public office, the genetic data broadcast worldwide?

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This current test will surely be refined and “perfected” in the years to come, and all its potential issues (medical, personal, legal, moral, religious, societal, etc.) established fairly and justly, protecting the individual’s safety, privacy and security.

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For more data, please visit [www.philipSchua.com](http://www.philipSchua.com)

E-mail address: [scalpelpen@gmail.com](mailto:scalpelpen@gmail.com)