



**News Release**

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## **THE STARKEY HEARING FOUNDATION ADDRESSES TEEN HEARING LOSS AHEAD OF STUDY**

A new study by Brigham and Women's Hospital finds one-in-five adolescents have hearing loss. That's a 30-percent increase over adolescents tested between 1988 and 1994. While the latest study didn't look specifically at noise and hearing loss, research shows loud music could put listeners at risk.

**Brent Edwards**, Vice President of Research with Starkey Laboratories has taken great interest in the problem of increased hearing loss in teens. "There is no question that this is a growing problem," Edwards commented. "Similar research has shown that younger people are also experiencing increased instances of tinnitus, which is associated with hearing loss." Edwards wrote about the very subject several years ago citing the deficiencies of Apple's parental solution to limiting sound level output.

In the past decade, premature hearing loss in youth has captured the attention of the hearing health care professionals at the Starkey Hearing Foundation. Bill Austin, CEO of Starkey Laboratories and Founder of the Starkey Hearing Foundation, said he isn't surprised by the findings. "With the proliferation of personal communication devices and the advanced technology in amplification, the prospect for misuse has increased," says Austin. "Sound is a wonderful thing, but over exposure to loud noises for extended periods of time can weaken the ears ability to work."

Austin points to iPods and mp3 players as a primary cause. "Before they used to say, 'Hey, you kids are going to lose your hearing because you are going to rock concerts and carrying boom boxes around,'" he said. But now the rock concert is in the ear. "We have little, tiny ear canals being fed with all this energy and that is what is killing all the hearing," said Austin. "A good rule of thumb is if you can hear what somebody is listening to through their headphones, it's already too loud."

To address this growing concern, the Starkey Hearing Foundation launched an initiative three years ago, **SoundMatters**, intended to raise awareness with teens about the dangers of over exposure to loud music, provide them with helpful tips on protection and serve as a primary resource for healthier hearing. "We saw this coming years ago" said Tani Austin, of the Starkey Hearing Foundation, "As the global leader in hearing healthcare, we knew it was our job to take a lead role in raising the social consciousness of hearing loss with teens, parents and educators."

Partnering with Best Buy, Sony, JVC, Ultimate Ears, GRAMMY Foundation and others, SoundMatters has received the support of prominent recording artists including: Taylor Swift, Trisha Yearwood, Sarah Bareilles and Ozzy Osbourne. "Teens may not be willing to listen to us, but we do know who they are listening to," Tani Austin said. "And what many of them don't realize, is the great lengths many of today's performers go to protect their own hearing. I really hope our kids follow suit."

To access the website, go to [www.starkeyhearingfoundation.org](http://www.starkeyhearingfoundation.org) and click on the **SoundMatters** banner.