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Noise-cancelling headphones may cause hearing problems – 20th February 2025

Level 0

More young people are wearing headphones. A report from the BBC suggests noise-cancelling earphones could cause hearing problems. The BBC interviewed ear doctors. The doctors said young people are having problems hearing sounds. They can hear sounds, but they're not sure where they are from.

A doctor said many young people are complaining about poor hearing. She said "There is a difference between hearing and listening," and that "listening skills are suffering". We need to hear many sounds so we can decide which ones are important. Headphones mean we can "forget" to hear important sounds.

Level 1

More and more young people are wearing headphones or earbuds. However, a report from the BBC suggests noise-cancelling earphones could cause hearing problems. The BBC interviewed doctors at five UK hospitals. The doctors said many young people are having problems processing sounds. They can hear sounds, but they're not sure where they are coming from. Noise-cancelling earphones could be the reason why.

Dr Renee Almeida, an audiologist, said many young people are complaining about poor hearing. She said we need to hear many kinds of sounds, so we can focus on and decide which sounds are important. Dr Almeida said: "There is a difference between hearing and listening," and that "listening skills are suffering". Another audiologist said we can "forget" to hear important sounds, like cars beeping and spoken words.

Level 2

Today, we see many young people wearing headphones or earbuds everywhere. They are becoming very popular. However, a report from the BBC suggests noise-cancelling earphones could lead to hearing problems. The BBC interviewed doctors and hearing specialists at five UK hospitals. The doctors told the BBC that many young patients are finding it more difficult to process sounds. The patients say they can hear sounds, but they're not sure where they are coming from. The doctors say noise-cancelling earphones could be the problem.

Dr Renee Almeida, an audiologist at a college in London, said more and more young people are complaining about poor hearing. She said people need to hear many kinds of sounds. This is to help us focus on and decide which sounds are important. Our ears must filter out unimportant sounds. Dr Almeida said: "There is a difference between hearing and listening. We can see that listening skills are suffering." Another audiologist said we can "forget" to hear important sounds, like cars beeping. She said headphones may cause problems in hearing spoken words.

Level 3

Wherever we look nowadays, we see people wearing headphones or earbuds. They are becoming increasingly popular with the younger generation, for work and for leisure. However, a new report from the BBC suggests noise-cancelling earphones could lead to hearing loss. The BBC interviewed doctors and audiologists (hearing specialists) at audiology departments in five UK hospitals. The doctors told reporters they are seeing many young people who are finding it more and more difficult to process sounds. The young patients say they can hear sounds, but they're often not sure where the sounds are coming from. The doctors say noise-cancelling earphones could be the problem.

The BBC spoke to Dr Renee Almeida, an audiologist at London's Imperial College. She said there was an increase in the number of young people complaining about poor hearing. She said people need to hear many kinds of sounds. One important listening skill is to focus on and decide which sounds are helpful. Our ears must filter out sounds we don't think are important. Dr Almeida said: "There is a difference between hearing and listening. We can see that listening skills are suffering." Another audiologist suggested that headphones can lead to bad listening habits. She said we can "forget" to hear important sounds, like cars beeping. Headphones may even cause problems in hearing spoken words.

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