

# **Doane Music Department Health and Well Being for Musicians**

The Department of Music, in agreement with Doane University's safety policy, strives to provide an educational environment that protects the hearing and voices of our faculty and students and that fosters healthy performance habits and technique. In so doing, we wish to instill in our students awareness of health issues that commonly affect musicians, including loss of hearing functions, so that they may conscientiously work to prevent injury and thereby continue to enjoy the benefits of music making throughout their lifetime. Health and safety depend in large part on the personal decisions of informed individuals. Each of us is personally responsible for avoiding risk and preventing injuries.

Each fall the music ensemble instructors will discuss key issues with students using documents developed jointly by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) and the Performing Arts Medicine Association (PAMA) referenced below.

## **Hearing Health**

Part of the role of any professional is to remain in the best condition to practice the profession. For all aspiring musicians, this involves safeguarding your hearing health. Whatever your plans after graduation – whether they involve playing, teaching, engineering, or simply enjoying music – you owe it to yourself and your fellow musicians to do all you can to protect your hearing. The way you hear music, the way you recognize and differentiate pitch, the way you play music; all are directly connected to your hearing. Do yourself a favor: protect it.

## **Neuromusculoskeletal Health**

The work of musicians, like that of athletes, is physically demanding. And musicians, just like athletes, need to warm up. They need to utilize proper form. They need to take breaks. They need to avoid “overdoing it.” And they need to take the proper precautions to safeguard their neuromusculoskeletal and vocal health, so that they can continue to play and sing the music they love for years to come.

## **Vocal Health**

Good health and healthy behaviors are important to all musicians, regardless of instrument or area of specialization. As current music students and future music professionals, you not only use your voice to speak, but now or sometime down the road, you may find yourself engaged with the singing voice in your role as a conductor, coach, teacher, performer, recording engineer, researcher, therapist, or other music professional.

## Injury Prevention

Good posture and technique are important. They'll make playing and singing easier, and you'll be less likely to hurt yourself. Learn proper body mechanics and be proactive!

1. When possible, avoid situations that put your neuromusculoskeletal health at risk.
2. Warm up before you practice and perform.
3. Take regular breaks from practice and rehearsal. A good rule of thumb is a 5-minute rest every half hour.
4. Limit excessive practice time.
5. Avoid excessive repetition of difficult music, especially if progress is slow.
6. Inasmuch as possible, avoid playing and/or singing music that is beyond your physical abilities or outside your natural range.
7. Refrain from sudden increases in practice and playing time.
8. Maintain good posture in life and when you practice and perform music. Be mindful of alignment, balance, and weight distribution.
9. Maintain good "mental hygiene." Get adequate sleep, good nutrition, and regular exercise.
10. Refrain from recreational drug use, excessive alcohol use, and smoking.
11. Do your best to limit and control stressors. Plan ahead.
12. Give yourself time to relax.

## Vocal Protection

Here's some extra advice for safeguarding your voice:

1. Drink plenty of water, at least 8 glasses a day.
2. Limit your consumption of caffeine and alcohol.
3. Don't smoke.
4. Be aware that some medications, such as allergy pills, may dry out your vocal tissues. Be aware of side effects and talk to your doctor if you have questions.
5. Avoid dry air environments. Consider using a humidifier.
6. Avoid yelling or raising your voice unnecessarily, throat clearing and loud coughing.
7. Rest your voice, especially if you are sick. Your voice and your body need time to recover.

Protect your hearing whenever possible. Here are some simple ways to reduce your risk of hearing loss:

1. Refrain from behaviors and avoid situations that might compromise your hearing health and the health of others.
2. 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 noise. In other words,

there's no harm in enjoying a fireworks display, so long as you're far away from the launch point.

3. 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.
4. Keep the volume of your music and your listening devices at a safe level, below 85 db.
5. Remember to take breaks during a rehearsal. Your ears will appreciate this quiet time.
6. Use earplugs or other protective devices in noisy environments and when using noisy equipment.

For more information, visit these websites:

On Protecting your Hearing:

[https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/02/4a\\_NASM\\_PAMA-Student\\_Guide-Standard.pdf](https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/02/4a_NASM_PAMA-Student_Guide-Standard.pdf)

On Protecting your Neuromusculoskeletal and Vocal Health:

[https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/02/4a\\_NASM\\_PAMA\\_NMH-Student\\_Guide-Standard\\_June-2014.pdf](https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/02/4a_NASM_PAMA_NMH-Student_Guide-Standard_June-2014.pdf)