



## Ear Plugs-When to Use Them

### **Preventing Noise –Induced Hearing Loss**

Exposure to loud noise, even for brief periods, can cause hearing loss and tinnitus, a ringing in the ears. The louder the sound and the longer the exposure, the more damage is done. Earplugs for sound attenuation come with a Noise Reduction Rating (NRR). The higher the rating, the more efficiently the plugs protect your ears from noise exposure. Some plugs are washable and re-useable, others are disposable. Remember not to put soiled plugs back in your ears. Earmuffs can also be used instead of, or along with earplugs. For people who wear glasses, earmuffs are not the best choice, as the temple piece breaks the seal between the skin and the muff. Using both plugs and muffs together adds protection in extreme noise.

### **Perforated Eardrum or Pressure-Equalization Tubes**

It is important to keep a perforation or tube clean and dry to prevent bacteria from entering the middle ear space. Waterproof earplugs are especially important to keep out bath water or when swimming.

### **Surfer's Ear**

After years of prolonged exposure to cold water the ear canal may experience bony growth called "exostoses," which narrow the ear canal. This causes it to become easily blocked by water, wax or debris. When the canal becomes blocked or nearly blocked it is often necessary to have an operation to open up the ear canal again.

Wearing earplugs can slow the growth of exostoses. Docs Pro Plugs are very good, but sometimes don't offer an ideal fit. Custom surfer's plugs are also available and are made from an impression of your ear. These can be made in our hearing aid office, Physician's Hearing Aid Center.

### **Swimmer's Ear**

Swimmer's Ear is an external, non-contagious ear canal infection. Water trapped in the ears can irritate the skin or cause infection. Doctors generally prescribe antibiotic treatments, and also have patients keep their infected ears out of the water for 10-14 days. Earplugs can be worn for bathing.