

Teens turn deaf ear to more noise

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Professor Christian Huggonet said young people were being exposed to excessively loud volumes on MP3 players and in clubs and rock concerts.

The professor also said that the generalized use of "compressed" sound in modern media - in which weak signals are boosted to the level of stronger ones - is changing the way people speak.

"We believe between 10 and 20 percent of adolescents have poor hearing," he told Le Figaro newspaper. "Suppliers of hearing aids all agree their clients are getting younger."

One of the most serious problems is the standardization of sound "compression."

Huggonet said: "Once the ear has got accustomed to this kind of sound, it finds it very hard to return to sounds of weak intensity. Young children used to watching cartoons with compressed sound can end up speaking in the same loud, monotone way."

At rock concerts and nightclubs, musicians wear ear plugs because of the dangers of high volumes. "The audience does not realize what is happening, and the risk of the inner cells exploding grows without any pain," Huggonet said.

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