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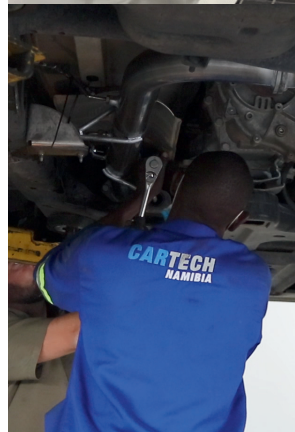
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Always listening? When audio media can become a problem

Whether on the train, while cooking, or falling asleep: headphones are always with us. Can all this listening be harmful?

Keeping up with the world situation while hanging up laundry, listening to an audiobook while driving, or listening to a podcast to help you fall asleep: Many people spend their daily lives surrounded by constant noise. Have we forgotten how to surround ourselves with peace and quiet? And could this constant barrage perhaps even be harmful?



"Audio media helps many people relax," says media educator Anneke Elsner, a member of the staff at the Institute for Communication and Media Studies at the University of Leipzig. Some people find it difficult to tolerate silence, especially during stressful periods.

Our own thoughts go in circles and become louder the more we pay attention to them. Then concentrating on something else can help us let go of our own thoughts a little more. When listening, this is even possible with our eyes closed and without a screen. Those who spend a lot of time in front of a computer at the office sometimes appreciate this.

Is listening better than television?

However, according to media educator Elsner, audio media are not necessarily better than being on your cell phone or watching television. We can also spend time in front of the screen during a video call with family or with an exciting and well-prepared educational video.

"With every form of media use, I would examine the motives behind it," recommends Elsner. Even supposedly relaxing listening can become problematic. "It can become a habit to constantly have something playing. For example, when falling asleep is no longer possible without an audiobook or we can no longer bear the silence," says Dr. Friederike Siller, professor at the Institute for Media Research and Media Education at the Technical University of Applied Sciences. While research on this is still thin, it's worth at least questioning your own listening habits.

When should you turn it off?

Because those who truly need constant acoustic distraction to escape the silence



or to suppress restlessness and frustration may eventually lose the ability to deal with such situations differently. According to Elsner, it's a good idea to listen to yourself. Questions like, "When do audio media really support me? When do they just distract me or perhaps even increase stress?" can help you better perceive what's going on inside you.

The media educator emphasizes: "Especially when falling asleep, media can help stop a spiral of thoughts. But then the question arises: Why am I finding it so difficult to stop the carousel of thoughts?" Actual sleeplessness can have various psychological as well as physical causes. Here, it's especially important to listen to yourself and, if necessary, seek professional help.

Last but not least, breaks from listening are also beneficial for ear health. Listening for long periods of time and too loudly – especially with headphones – can damage our ears.

Four tips for a more conscious use of audio media:

1. Regular body check-in: Constantly ask yourself why I'm reaching for an audio medium? Reflection helps you better understand your own needs.
2. Active listening: Instead of constantly having something else playing in the background, schedule time specifically for media. This leaves space for other activities and moments of silence. Nice side effects: You look forward to the

next podcast episode more when you don't just "listen to it" and you appreciate the medium and its creative process a little more.

3. Endure silence: Even if it's difficult, consciously take time for silence. You don't have to stare at the ceiling for ten minutes. A good place to start would be to leave the house without headphones or drive in silence. The advantage: There are enough other sounds to prevent boredom. You quickly forget that nothing is playing in the background.
4. Adjust the volume: Make sure you listen as quietly as possible and only as loudly as necessary. It's also important to use headphones as little as possible.

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Health Series - Calendar: All 40 Weeks of Pregnancy - week 18

Starting next week, your second ultrasound will be scheduled—and with it, a picture of your baby. And: Why you should know your pelvic floor.

Weeks 18 of Pregnancy

Baby's Development

By the 18th week of pregnancy at the latest, your baby bump will already be noticeably bulging. No wonder: The unborn child in your belly is growing rapidly. On average, fetuses now weigh around 200 grams – but this can vary in individual cases. "Because the uterus is growing, the ligaments that hold it in place stretch," says Dr. Mirja Pagenkemper, who is researching prenatal imprinting as part of the PRINCE study (Prenatal Identification of

Children's Health). "This can cause pain in the groin area."

When there is a pulling sensation in the abdomen, many pregnant women – especially first-time mothers – quickly become concerned. "If in doubt, the woman should have her examined by a doctor," says Pagenkemper.

In girls, the foundation for later childbearing is already developing: "Her ovaries have already differentiated to the point that the first follicles are forming," says Pagenkemper. These are surrounded by a layer of cells. Scientists suspect that this layer helps preserve the egg in the dormant stage until the woman reaches adulthood.

Now, during the fetal period, millions of eggs are formed – but after birth, none at all. Many are broken down by the body



even before birth. When a girl is born, she has about one to two million eggs left, which remain in the dormant stage. By the time puberty begins, only about 40,000 to 200,000 follicles remain. Numerous eggs then remain in the dormant phase for many years. By menopause, the woman's supply is completely depleted.

The Mother's Health

Even if you're feeling fit and well, you shouldn't miss a prenatal checkup. If you experience any discomfort between two appointments, it's better to see your doctor more often. And: Your second ultrasound appointment is coming up soon. It's due between the 19th and 22nd week of pregnancy. Make your appointment now at the latest.

Your unborn child is growing larger and heavier. This puts increasing pressure on your pelvic floor muscles, as well as your

bladder. Childbirth will also place a great deal of strain on your pelvic floor – it must open wide to allow the baby's head to pass through. If it is overstressed, you may experience bladder weakness (incontinence). This is unpleasant, but in many cases, it is easily treatable. What's more, you can prevent bladder weakness now, during pregnancy.

Tip: Exercises to prepare for labor

Because pregnant women often experience back pain and childbirth can put strain on the pelvic floor, it helps if pregnant women regularly exercise for their bodies. But where exactly is the pelvic floor located? The first step is to become aware of the muscles in your pelvis. Cough to help you. Do you notice anything moving in your pelvis? These are the muscles. Even if you imagine you have to hold back urine, the pelvic floor muscles are activated.

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Health & Safety - A Clear Path to Eye Safety: Making Prescription Safety Eyewear Easy to Access

How improving access, streamlining processes, and adopting digital solutions can increase compliance and reduce injury risks in prescription safety eyewear programs.



In industrial and hazardous work environments, eye injuries pose a significant risk. The National Eye Institute reports that the majority of eye injuries can be prevented by wearing appropriate protective eyewear. Despite the clear benefits, many organizations inadvertently create barriers that hinder employee access to safety eyewear. To ensure the success of a prescription safety eyewear program, prioritizing ease of access and availability is crucial. Without these elements, even the most well-intentioned programs can fail, leaving employees vulnerable to preventable injuries.

The Role of Accessibility in Safety

A prescription safety eyewear program is only effective if employees can easily obtain and consistently wear their protective lenses. Limited access due to bureaucratic red tape, restricted approval processes, or supply shortages can significantly reduce compliance. If employees cannot immediately access the eyewear they need, they may resort to working without protection, leading to unnecessary risks and potential injuries.

For a program to be successful, safety eyewear must be available 24/7 to all employees, including those working in the field or in remote locations. Any delays or complications in obtaining eyewear undermine the program's purpose and put workers at unnecessary risk.

Pitfalls of Using Fax or Forms

Programs based on fax methods (despite their age, fax machines remain prevalent in healthcare and eyecare for transmitting patient information) or programs that use forms—even electronic ones—reduce accessibility and contribute to delays. Traditional fax transmissions do not use encryption, making it easier for hackers to intercept and access the transmitted data. Paper (and some electronic) forms lack encryption, meaning any data on them is readily accessible if the forms fall into the wrong hands.

- **HIPAA Violations:** In the United States, the Health Insurance Portability and



Accountability Act (HIPAA) sets strict guidelines for the protection of PHI. Using insecure methods to transmit PHI can lead to violations and hefty fines.

- **PCI DSS Non-Compliance:** The Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) mandates secure handling of credit card information. Insecure transmission methods can result in non-compliance and significant financial penalties.
- **Forms are not Real-Time.** The contents of faxed or uploaded forms must be re-keyed into another closed system that introduces delays and the potential for errors.

Eliminating Bureaucratic Barriers

A common pitfall in prescription safety eyewear programs is excessive administrative control. While some oversight is necessary, complex approval processes, such as requiring managerial authorization for lens upgrades or specific frame selections, introduce unnecessary obstacles. Employees should be able to access their protective eyewear without navigating a maze of paperwork and approvals.

Organizations should strive for simple, clear, and consistent policies, such as:

- Providing a standard benefit (e.g., “One pair per year” or a flat dollar amount employees can use toward their eyewear).
- Offering a well-curated, up-to-date catalog of safety-approved prescription eyewear options.
- Eliminating reimbursement processes where employees must pay in advance and wait weeks for reimbursement instead of using direct billing.
- Ensuring that employees can replace damaged or lost eyewear without undue delays.
- An easy way for employees to view and monitor their benefit period and understand when their benefit period begins and ends.

The Impact of Availability on Compliance
Employees are more likely to wear safety eyewear when it is readily available and suits their needs. Offering customization options—such as anti-fog coatings, transition lenses, non-conductive or

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lightweight frames—encourages consistent use throughout the workday. If employees feel uncomfortable with their eyewear, they are less likely to wear it consistently, increasing the risk of injury.

Secure online ordering systems can significantly reduce the security risks associated with transmitting PHI and credit card information. Implementing digital solutions not only ensures compliance with regulatory requirements but also protects employees' sensitive data from potential threats. In addition, employees can receive real-time notifications and updates about their orders, ensuring they are informed about the status of their eyewear, from submission to delivery. This transparency reduces uncertainty and enhances user satisfaction. Online systems can be integrated with other company systems, such as HR and payroll, to streamline benefits management and ensure that employees receive their eyewear benefits without additional administrative hurdles.

The ability to provide access using mobile devices is another option to significantly enhance accessibility for employees who may not have immediate, easy access to a desktop computer. Employees can also use a mobile device to capture photos of their prescription and eliminate the risk of fabricating eyewear with an incorrect eyeglass prescription. Mobile devices and websites use encryption and secure payment gateways to protect sensitive information, such as personal identifiable health information (PHI) and credit card numbers.

Additionally, organizations must ensure that eyewear availability extends across all locations. If some employees have easier access than others, inconsistencies in compliance will arise. A successful program ensures that all employees, regardless of their worksite, have equal and immediate access to necessary eye protection.

Reducing Hidden Costs Through Simplicity

Overly complex benefit structures may



seem like a way to control costs, but they often introduce hidden transaction costs that outweigh their intended savings. Employees frustrated by confusing benefit structures may delay obtaining eyewear or seek unauthorized alternatives. Instead, organizations should focus on efficiency by:

- Streamlining ordering processes to reduce wait times and eliminating multi-step approval chains.
- Avoiding restrictive conditions like requiring purchase order approvals.
- Regularly reviewing and updating frame selections while ensuring company-wide visibility of available options.

Conclusion: Prioritizing Protection Over Complexity

The primary goal of any prescription safety eyewear program should be to protect employees from eye injuries, not to burden them with unnecessary obstacles. By ensuring 24/7 availability, eliminating excessive bureaucracy, and offering clear, simple benefit structures, organizations can maximize compliance and improve workplace safety. Ultimately, the success of a program depends on its usability. When employees have easy, consistent access to protective eyewear, they are far more likely to wear it when it matters most. Organizations must critically evaluate their current policies to remove barriers and focus on what truly matters—keeping their employees safe. For more information, E.M.A. recommends to contact our platinum supporter OSH-Med international and their partners.

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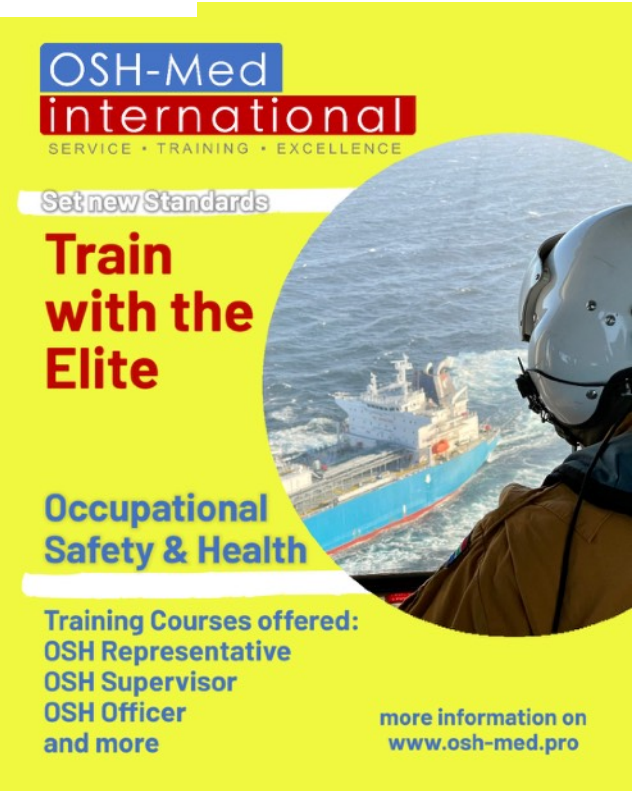
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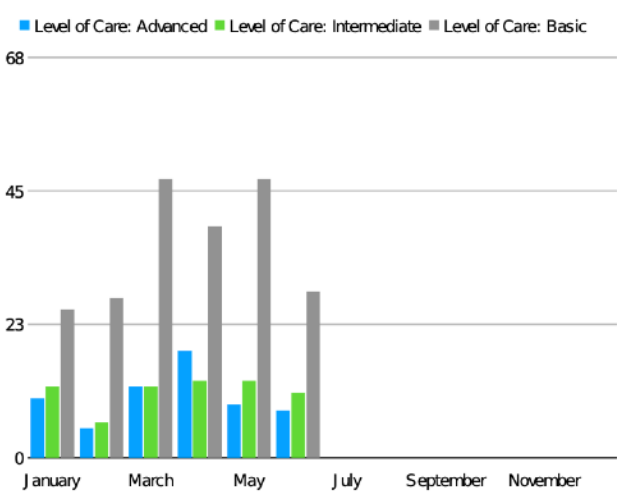
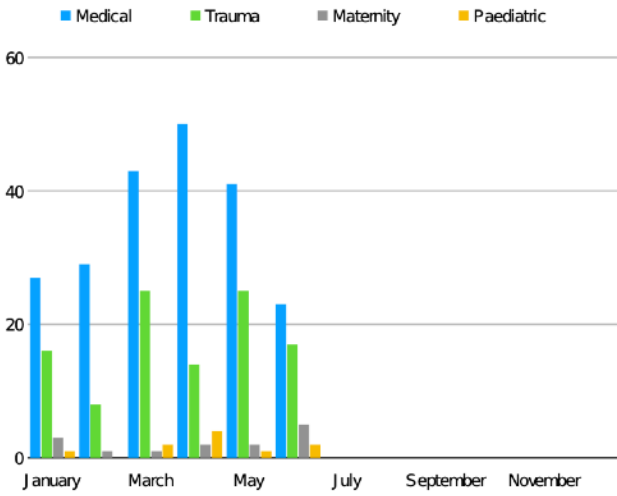
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February	29	8	1	0	5	6	27
March	43	25	1	2	12	12	47
April	50	14	2	4	18	13	39
May	41	25	2	1	9	13	47
June	23	17	5	2	8	11	28
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August							
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