

Did you know that golf could be bad for your ears?

Most people know that exposure to loud noises, particularly when this is over a period of time, can damage your hearing. This is why health and safety guidelines recommend the use of noise protectors for those who are engaged in noisy work or leisure activities.

However, what most people don't know is that golfers could be damaging their hearing from playing the game they love. The risk is associated with the 'sonic boom' created by thin faced titanium drivers. It is well documented that 'Impulse noise' – a short-duration, high-pitched disturbance can be equally damaging to your ears as other types of noise.

This was first reported in the British Medical Journal back in 2009, when a 55-year-old man went to his doctor with tinnitus and hearing loss. The probable cause was identified as being down to his using a King Cobra LD titanium driver three times a week over 18 months. The keen golfer described the noise of the club hitting the ball as sounding 'like a gun going off', and test results showed that his hearing loss was typical of those seen with exposure to loud noises.

After researching on the web, doctors found several comments from other golfers who described the noise made by titanium drivers as a 'loud bang' or a 'sonic boom which resonated across the course.' So, they decided to test several



manufacturer's titanium clubs, including Calloway, King Cobra, Nike and Mizuno and found they all produced a louder sound than stainless steel drivers. The worst offender was the Ping G10 at over 130 decibels, with all the others being between 110db and 120db. Commenting on the findings Dr Malcolm Buchanan, an Ear Nose & Throat specialist, said: "Our results show that thin-faced titanium drivers may produce sufficient sound to induce temporary or even permanent cochlear damage in susceptible individuals." He went on to say: "Caution should be exercised by golfers who play regularly with thin-faced titanium drivers to avoid damage to their hearing."

An audiologist with the Royal National Institute for the Deaf, said

at the time: "Exposure to loud impulse sounds over time can cause damage. It is a short, sharp burst of very loud peak sound with this type of golf club (*that can damage someone's hearing*)."

Dr Michele Gillentine, an American Audiologist stated: "The best advice for avoiding potential noise-induced hearing loss in any loud environment is to wear properly fitted hearing protection. Nearly invisible options are available, as well as specialised filters that protect from the high-impulse sounds while allowing face-to-face conversational speech to come through in most situations. **Obtaining baseline hearing evaluation by an audiologist and follow up annually is recommended to identify potential hearing difficulties.**"

Here at Correct Hearing we are passionate about hearing healthcare and would encourage anyone who could potentially be at risk of having their hearing damaged by sound to get their hearing tested regularly. We offer free hearing tests, and if required can recommend various noise protection devices including the type described above by Dr Gillentine. ■

This is another area where the Correct Hearing Healthcare service goes beyond just the sale and fitting of hearing aids.

To make an appointment please phone **0115 961 8351** or email **info@correcthearing.co.uk**

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