



## **Earplugs are as important on a night out as condoms, according to an expert from charity Action on Hearing Loss (AoHL)**

As reported by MailOnline, Gemma Twitchen, senior audiologist for AoHL, wants to see pubs and clubs step up to make earplugs as readily available to customers as condoms.

“Thanks to clever campaigns, posters and adverts over the past few decades it is now ingrained in all of our culture and minds to grab a condom before a night out – because safe sex is a given,” she explained. So let's make ear plugs a night-out essential.

The ultimate aim is to see them available in the same way that condoms are in vending machines – in a range of colours and design, perhaps hold off on flavoured ones though!

You see loads of people walking up and down the high street wearing big headphones, iPods and more discreet designs, so why not wear tiny ear plugs at a gig or a rave? They do not make you look uncool and they do not stop you from enjoying the music as people usually think – they help protect your hearing, which is something we all take for granted.

What is the point in risking your health for a good night out, be protected and plug up your ears – better to be safe than sorry.

### **A good idea**

However, rather than calls falling on deaf ears, many operators are already taking steps to safeguard staff and customers according to UKHospitality's chief executive, Kate Nicholls.

“A number of venues, particularly live music venues, already provide free earplugs to customers who want them and distribute them to staff,” she explains.

If you are frequently listening to very loud music then earplugs are probably a good idea. If pubs are playing loud music often, live or otherwise, then some customers may appreciate the chance to purchase them in the venue. If loud music is a fixture of your pub then make sure you talk to your staff to see if they need them.

### **Free earplugs like tap water**

Chris Sherrington, of the Fulford Arms, in York – a finalist in the Live Entertainment category at the 2018 Great British Pub Awards – explains that earplugs should be made available at pubs and clubs as part of the venue operators' duty of care for staff and customers.

“We give away ear plugs for free to both staff and customers as it's only responsible for a venue where live music is played to offer them,” he explains.

“I know of some venues, such as Wharf Chambers in Leeds, that sell them for 50p over the bar, and we have also been approached by companies in the past wanting to install these vending machines, but we are not interested. It's in our interest to protect our customers, whether it be hearing or just general health and safety. People can buy good sound protection online if they are regular gig goers, and we also encourage that for our staff, but offering basic sound protection for free is much the same as offering tap water and I feel it should be mandatory for any environment where the noise regularly goes above 85 decibels. We are happy to front that cost ourselves.”

## **Serious consideration**

Emily Kolltveit of The Chandos Arms, in Colindale, in north London, another finalist in the 2018 Great British Pub Awards' Live Entertainment category, explains that suggestions by AoHL merit serious consideration by publicans.

"I think that it is our responsibility to provide customers with the best possible experience and to guard them from anything that might result in short- or long-term damage," she explains.

In the same way that we have a responsibility to promote responsible drinking then we have a responsibility of care in other areas of concern which would also include mental health as well as physical health.

If charities such as AoHL are making these suggestions then we should look more seriously into this idea. It's all about making our pubs reliably safe places for people to meet and enjoy a wealth of live entertainments, great food and a variety of alcoholic and no alcoholic drinks. A pub is so much more than just a few beers on tap, it is a forum for humanity to safely express, explore and enjoy itself.

## **Isolating experience**

Typically described as ringing, whooshing or hissing in the ears, tinnitus is often triggered after someone is exposed to loud noises like music, with one in 10 people in the UK claiming to have experienced it at least once. However, for around 10% of those the sound never fades.

AoHL chief executive Mark Atkinson explained: "Tinnitus can be an isolating experience that leaves people feeling helpless."

By encouraging others to take part in the campaign we hope more will share their experiences to shed light on this misunderstood condition and show how it affects them.

Celebrities Phillip Schofield, Susanna Reid and Will.i.am have in the past opened up about their ongoing struggles with tinnitus, and this year musician KT Tunstall is helping the charity with #ThisIsTinnitus by sharing her own video.

*Source:*

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