

Safe Listening

FOR LIFE!

At all ages and life stages, you can permanently damage your hearing by listening to sounds that are too loud for too long. This is called **noise-induced hearing loss**, or **NIHL**.

1 in 8 children and teens aged 6–19 years and **1 in 4** adults aged 20–69 years are estimated to have NIHL.

This type of hearing loss is **preventable**, but once it occurs, it is **irreversible**.

How it Happens

When you listen to noise that is **too loud**, for **too long**, and **too often**, it's a recipe for trouble.

A healthy dose of noise: Sounds at 70 decibels (dBA) or lower are generally safe to listen to for an extended period of time. Sounds at 80 dBA (for adults) or 75 dBA (for children) can lead to hearing loss if you listen to them for more than 8 hours at a time. The louder the noise, the less time you can listen safely.

Loud Noise is Everywhere

Many of us are exposed to loud noise. Some people have loud jobs or hobbies that put them at greater risk of NIHL.

Dangerous and Safe Noise Levels

Painful impulse noise—Not safe for any period of time (even with use of hearing protection)*

150 dBp** = fireworks at 3 feet, firecracker, shotgun
140 dBp = firearms

Painful steady noise—Not safe for any period of time (even with use of hearing protection)*

130 dBA = jackhammer
120 dBA = jet plane takeoff, siren, pneumatic drill

Extremely loud—Dangerous to hearing (wear earplugs or earmuffs)

112 dBA = maximum output of some MP3 players, rock concert, chainsaw
106 dBA = gas-powered leaf blower, snow blower
100 dBA = tractor, listening with earphones
94 dBA = hair dryer, kitchen blender, food processor



Moderate—Safe listening for any time period

70 dBA = group conversation, alarm clock
60 dBA = typical conversation, dishwasher, clothes dryer
50 dBA = moderate rainfall
40 dBA = quiet room

Faint—Safe listening for any time period

30 dBA = whisper, quiet library

*Wear double hearing protection (in- and over-the-ear)

**Measured in dB peak pressure, or dBp



HOW TO PROTECT YOUR HEARING

You can enjoy your favorite activities and protect your hearing by following these tips:

- **Wear hearing protection (earplugs, earmuffs)** during loud events or activities.
- **Download a sound meter app** to monitor noise level in public places.
- **Keep a distance of 500 feet or more** from loud noise sources such as speakers.
- **Use quieter products** (e.g., toys, appliances, power tools)—check product reviews/ratings.
- **Keep the volume to half** when using earbuds or headphones.
- **Consider purchasing noise-canceling earbuds or headphones**, to reduce the urge to crank the volume.
- **Take listening breaks every hour** when using earbuds/headphones or attending loud events.
- **Heed the warning signs** and leave a noisy place if you have pain, ringing in the ears, or difficulty hearing.

