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 dBA 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.

Contact a certified audiologist if you are experiencing symptoms or have concerns. Learn more at [www.asha.org/public](http://www.asha.org/public).