Hearing Protection: Older Children and Adolescents

Older children and teenagers have some unique risk factors for hearing loss. They can protect their hearing from common hazards.

**Noisy Tech/Environments:** Without a doubt, excessive noise becomes an increasing threat at these ages. Culprits include listening to loud music with earbuds or incessant shouting via gaming headphones, as well as attending noisy events at stadiums and concert venues.

- **TIPS:** Talk to kids about protecting their hearing and why it matters (e.g., it allows them to keep enjoying the entertainment they currently enjoy). Enforce hourly listening breaks, and teach kids to keep volume down on tech devices (a new global standard specifies 75 decibels, for no longer than 40 hours weekly, as the safe level for kids). Use earplugs at noisy events.

**Head Injuries:** Car accidents, sports-related falls, and other sources of head injuries can cause hearing loss. Kids should wear protective gear such as helmets when appropriate. It is important for parents to watch for possible signs of hearing difficulty following injury, including new or unexplained academic problems, social withdrawal, and listening to the television at loud volumes.

**Musical Ambitions:** Budding musicians are plentiful, but hearing protection is critical. Musicians’ earplugs are a great bet for band practice, lessons, and more. Purchase them in music stores or online—or an audiologist can custom fit a pair for a child or teen.

**First Jobs:** Teenagers’ first jobs, from landscaping to restaurant kitchen duty, are often noisy ones. Encourage teens to wear hearing protection when possible and take quiet breaks—and pay attention to signs of hearing loss.

**Of Note:** The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends hearing screenings for older children and teens at three ages: 11–14 years, 15–17 years, and 18–21 years. Parents who suspect that a child is having difficulty hearing should not wait for routine screenings—visit a certified audiologist for a hearing evaluation.

Learn more at [www.asha.org/public](http://www.asha.org/public) and [www.hearingloss.org](http://www.hearingloss.org).