Did You Know?

Noise is all around us in our everyday environments and is a common cause of hearing loss.

- 36 million Americans have hearing loss. One in three developed their hearing loss as a result of exposure to noise.
- Noise-induced hearing loss typically occurs slowly, over a long period of time, and is painless.
- Hearing impairment not only affects your ability to understand speech but also has a negative impact on your social and emotional well-being.
- Hearing loss from noise exposure is preventable!

Types of Hearing Protection

Hearing protection decreases the intensity, or loudness, of noise and helps to preserve your hearing.

There are two types of hearing protection:

Earplugs (or inserts) are typically made of silicone or foam and are inserted into the ear canal to create a seal. They come in a variety of sizes and textures to provide optimum fit. Custom-made earplugs, which are popular with musicians, can be obtained from an audiologist.

Earmuffs fit over the entire outer ear and form a seal so that the ear canal is blocked. (Fashion earmuffs for keeping your ears warm do not protect from harmful sound.)

Cotton balls or tissues are very poor hearing protectors.

Visit **www.HowsYourHearing.org** to "Find an Audiologist" in your local area.

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF AUDIOLOGY
800-AAA-2336
www.audiology.org

Noise and Hearing Loss

American Academy of Audiology

Noise, Noise…Everywhere!

One of the most common places you may encounter noise is at home. Noise-induced hearing loss can occur from prolonged exposure to everyday household items such as

- Lawn equipment
- Power tools
- Toys
- MP3 players
- Stereo and TV sound systems
- Appliances (blenders, hand mixers, food processors, and hair dryers)

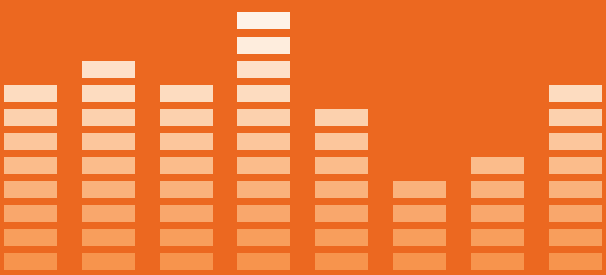
You may also be exposed to noise while attending

- Sporting events
- Concerts
- Dance clubs or bars
- Exercise classes
- Auto racing events
- Fireworks displays

Or during recreational activities such as

- Motorcycle riding
- Snowmobiling
- Shooting firearms

Hazardous noise levels are also frequently encountered in the workplace.



Levels of Noise In decibels (dB)

PAINFUL & DANGEROUS		
Use hearing protection or avoid	140	▪ Fireworks ▪ Gun shots ▪ Custom car stereos (at full volume)
	130	▪ Jackhammers ▪ Ambulances
UNCOMFORTABLE		
Dangerous over 30 seconds	120	▪ Jet planes (during take off)
VERY LOUD		
Dangerous over 30 minutes	110	▪ Concerts (any genre of music) ▪ Car horns ▪ Sporting events
	100	▪ Snowmobiles ▪ MP3 players (at full volume)
	90	▪ Lawnmowers ▪ Power tools ▪ Blenders ▪ Hair dryers
Over 85 dB for extended periods can cause permanent hearing loss.		
LOUD		
	80	▪ Alarm clocks
	70	▪ Traffic ▪ Vacuums
MODERATE		
	60	▪ Normal conversation ▪ Dishwashers
	50	▪ Moderate rainfall
SOFT		
	40	▪ Quiet library
	30	▪ Whisper
FAINT		
	20	▪ Leaves rustling

FAQs

Can I permanently lose my hearing from exposure to loud noise?

Yes, permanent hearing loss can result from prolonged exposure to loud noise over 85 decibels (dB). This type of hearing loss is called “sensorineural” hearing loss. There is no medicine or surgery that will reverse the damage.

What is that ringing sound in my ears?

The ringing is called “tinnitus” and typically occurs after periods of noise exposure. Tinnitus can be permanent and may affect your quality of life, as many musicians can attest.

How do I know if a noise is dangerous?

As a general rule, noise may damage your hearing if

- You have to shout over background noise to make yourself heard
- The noise makes your ears ring
- You have decreased or “muffled” hearing for several hours after exposure
- The noise is painful to your ears

How can I protect my hearing?

- Wear ear protection such as earplugs or earmuffs when you are attending a loud concert or using firearms, power tools, or lawn equipment.
- Turn down the volume while listening to music on a stereo system or a personal music device (such as an MP3 player).
- Walk away from the noise.

What if I suspect I have a hearing loss?

Make an appointment to see an audiologist, who will perform a hearing test to determine the type and severity of hearing loss you may have.