

## Noise-Induced Hearing Loss

Noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) usually occurs painlessly over a period of time, but may occur from one exposure to an extremely loud noise. Because loud sounds can damage the hair cells in the inner ear that send sound to the brain, a person's ability to understand speech can be affected. Symptoms of NIHL may be distorted or muffled sounds, ringing in the ears, and/or difficulty hearing.

Noise sources can include headphones, concerts, motorcycles, snowmobiles, jet skis, firearms, firecrackers, power tools, household appliances, manufacturing, construction, aircraft, sirens, explosives, and many others.

Experts have established that we should not be exposed to 90 decibels of sound for longer than eight hours a day. For every 5 dB increase in volume, the maximum allowable exposure time is cut in half.

Lawn Mower	90 dB
Snowmobile	100 dB
Stereo Headphones	105-110 dB
Car Horn	110 dB
Jackhammer	113 dB
Rock Concert	115-120 dB
Jet Taking Off	130 dB
Firearms	125-170 dB

### How loud is too loud?

- If you must raise your voice to be heard
- If you have difficulty understanding someone who is an arm's length away
- Speech sounds muffled or dull after noise exposure
- You have pain or ringing in your ears after noise exposure

Noise doesn't just affect adults—it can be the cause of significant "premature" hearing loss. A national study estimated that approximately 12 percent of all children, age 6 to 19, have NIHL.

### Prevention Strategies

- Avoid and limit periods of exposure to noise
- Wear hearing protectors. The higher the noise reduction rating (NRR), the better the protection is. Consider doubling up with plugs and muffs in extreme unavoidable noise.
- Buy quiet appliances, equipment and toys
- Alternate a noisy activity with a quiet one to give your ears a rest.

### For more information:

American Academy of Audiology

[www.audiology.org](http://www.audiology.org)

League for the Hard of Hearing

[www.lhh.org](http://www.lhh.org)

National Hearing Conservation Association

[www.hearingconservation.org](http://www.hearingconservation.org)