

information sheet

Everywhere noise! - Your hearing is at risk

Noise and the risk of hearing loss

The noise of modern life is all around you—at work, at home, on the streets and in the classroom.

Do you ever think about the permanent damage this noise might be doing to your hearing?

Or your options for controlling the volume and protecting your ears?

If not, it's time to start!

One or two generations ago, hearing loss caused by over-exposure to noise didn't usually become apparent until people were in their 60s.

But now, this sort of hearing loss is rapidly showing up at younger ages.

So find out about managing noise—and act now!

The problem with noise

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), noise can cause

- Insomnia
- Hormonal imbalances
- Stress
- High blood pressure

Noise can also cause **permanent hearing loss**.

Does hearing loss matter?

Hearing loss can dramatically affect quality of life.

And the hearing loss caused by over-exposure to noise is permanent.

People with hearing loss mention

- Feeling isolated
- Having trouble communicating
- Experiencing headaches, tiredness and anxiety
- Having difficulties with employment

They also miss much-loved sounds—like music, the voices of loved ones and sounds of nature.

Younger people are being affected

Research suggests that many of today's young people will suffer hearing problems like today's 70 year-olds by the time they turn 40.

That's partly because of the increasingly noisy lives we lead. We enjoy high-noise entertainment options and appreciate labour-saving power tools.

But the problem is, hearing loss through over-exposure to noise develops slowly. Often, we don't know it's happened until it's too late.

So you like your music loud?

Some people think loud music is cool. But the pleasure can be short-lived and the consequences severe.

Listening to music at a volume that's too loud and for too long is increasingly being associated with hearing loss.

If you're a young New Zealander, there's a high chance you've already experienced symptoms of hearing damage after listening to loud music. The symptoms might include

- Dullness of hearing
- Ringing in the ears (tinnitus)

These are both early signs of irreversible hearing damage.

Yet like many other people, you've probably done nothing to prevent the damage.

Preventing over-exposure to noise

The solutions for protecting your hearing from noise are simple. Here are just a few.

When using your iPod or MP3 player

- Keep the volume below 60% of maximum
- Ask a friend if they can hear your tunes—and if they can, turn down the volume!
- Never use the music to drown out other noise
- Use larger earphones instead of small earbuds

When going to clubs, concerts, a gym or the latest blockbuster movie

- Move away from the loud speakers
- Buy reusable earplugs
- Invest in a pair of custom-made earplugs that are comfortable and maintain sound quality

When using power tools or mowing the lawn, wear earplugs or safety-approved ear muffs.

And always take regular breaks away from any loud noise.

Protecting your hearing now will increase your chances of enjoying the sounds you love in later life.



What if my hearing is already damaged?

If you think you already have a hearing loss, it's even more important to protect the hearing you have left. Take action today by asking an audiologist or hearing therapist for advice.

What's your noise exposure?

The term dB (deciBel) and the dB scale are used world-wide for measuring sound levels. A soft

whisper might be only 30 decibels, while a jet taking off might be 130 decibels.

Use our approximate noise levels indicator to estimate how much noise you're exposed to each day.

And remember!

- Continued exposure to sounds over 80 dB may lead to permanent hearing loss
- The louder the noise, the less time you can listen to it before your hearing is permanently damaged

Noise levels indicator

dB	Sound	Effect on hearing
140	Shot gun blast	Sounds above 130 dB may cause pain Sounds above 115 dB cause instant damage
130	Jet taking off	
110	Rock group or trail bike	Brief exposure to sounds over 80 dB may cause temporary hearing loss Continued exposure to sounds over 80 dB leads to permanent hearing loss
100	Pneumatic drill or MP3 player at top volume	
95	Lawn mower	
90	Heavy truck	
80	Busy street or loud radio	Below 80 dB, you can work an 8-hour day without using ear protection
70	Noisy office	
60	Normal conversation	
40	Quiet office or home	
30	Soft whisper	
15	Average hearing threshold	
0	Acute hearing threshold	

Protecting your hearing from noise will increase your chances of enjoying the sounds you love in later life.

More information & support

NFD (National Foundation for the Deaf)

www.nfd.org.nz

205 Parnell Road

P O Box 37729, Parnell, Auckland 1151

Ph 0800 867 446

Tel/TTY (09) 307 2922

Fax (09) 307 2923

Email enquiries@nfd.org.nz

Hearing Therapists - LIFE Unlimited

www.life.nzl.org

Central House, Level 5

26 Brandon Street, Wellington

Ph 0800 008 011

Tel (04) 499 5851

Fax (04) 499 5853

Email info@life.nzl.org

The Hearing Association

www.hearing.org.nz

435 Church Street

P O Box 1274, Palmerston North 4440

Ph 0800 23 34 45

Tel (06) 357 8708

Fax (06) 357 8710

Email enquiries@hearing.org.nz

Department of Labour—Health & Safety

www.osh.govt.nz

- Search for *listen*
- Download a booklet of questions and answers on how noise affects you.

Title: *Listen—You might be going deaf*

Accident Compensation Corporation

www.acc.co.nz

- Search for noise + hearing loss

We've prepared these fact sheets using information from external sources and advice from NZ-based experts. Please feel free to copy or use any of the material.

The information, while accurate at time of printing, cannot replace expert advice from a hearing professional. Always seek help quickly for any ear or hearing problem.

Published 2008