

How Loud is Too Loud?

Every day we experience sound in our environment such as the sounds from television and radio, household appliances, power tools and traffic. Normally, these sounds are at safe levels that don't damage our hearing. However, when we're exposed to harmful noise—sounds that are too loud or loud sounds that last a long time—sensitive structures in our inner ear can be damaged, causing noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL).

Can Noise Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL) be prevented?

NIHL is the only type of hearing loss that is completely preventable. If you understand the hazards of noise and how to practice good hearing health, you can protect your hearing for life. Here's how:

- ▲ *Prolonged exposure to noise at or above 85dB can cause hearing loss.*
- ▲ Wear hearing protection when involved in a loud activity (activity-specific earplugs and earmuffs are available at hardware and sporting goods stores).
- ▲ Be alert to hazardous noises in the environment.
- ▲ Protect the ears of children who are too young to protect their own.
- ▲ Make family, friends, and colleagues aware of the hazards of noise.
- ▲ Have your hearing tested if you think you might have hearing loss.

Average decibel ratings of some familiar things:

Whisper	30 dB
Refrigerator	40 dB
Normal conversation	60 dB
Dishwasher	75 dB
Heavy city traffic or school cafeteria	85 dB
<i>Power lawn mower</i>	<i>90 dB</i>
<i>Woodshop, snowmobile</i>	<i>100dB</i>
<i>Personal stereo at maximum volume</i>	<i>105 dB</i>
<i>Rock concert, symphony orchestra</i>	<i>110 dB</i>
<i>Ambulance siren</i>	<i>120 dB</i>
<i>Jet taking off</i>	<i>140 dB</i>
<i>Firecracker, shotgun</i>	<i>140-165 dB</i>

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; NIH; NIDCD