

Noise Induced Hearing Loss



Every day we experience noise in our environment but some noise can be harmful when it is too loud, even for a brief time or when we are repeatedly exposed to the noise. Excessive levels of noise can damage sensitive structures in the inner ear and cause Noise Induced Hearing Loss. 37% of all hearing loss in Australia is due to exposure to excessive levels of noise.

What is excessive noise?

Noise is considered excessive when you must use a raised voice or shout in order to be able to speak to someone at an arm's length or about one metre away.

It is important to note that a hearing impairment does not protect a person from further noise damage nor does it give a person less susceptibility to noise induced hearing damage. In fact, it is critical to protect what hearing remains.

Loud noise affects your general health, it causes:

- Irritability and headaches
- Aggression and stress
- Reduced white blood cell count
- Reduced immune response
- Gastric ulcers
- Raised blood pressure and accelerated heart rate
- Loss of clarity of vision, colour perception and night vision
- Heart disease.

The louder the sound, the less time you can safely listen to it. Just because a sound isn't annoying doesn't make it safe, for example, if you think you've toughened up your ears to loud music or become used to loud music, it's possible you have already suffered some damage.

If you work or frequently spend time in a noisy place or listen to loud music you could be losing your hearing without even realising it.

What are the signs of hearing loss?

- turning the TV or stereo up so loud that others complain
- frequently needing to ask others to repeat themselves or thinking people mumble
- not being able to hear properly on the telephone
- finding it hard to hear in noisy situations such as restaurants or around groups of people
- missing out on important parts of conversations – you can hear but not understand.

Loss of hearing is a gradual process and it is painless.

Once your hearing is damaged it will NEVER come back

- ↳ there is no surgery
- ↳ there are no implants or transplants
- ↳ there is no repair or healing over time
- ↳ there is no medication.

Hearing aids magnify/increase the volume of the sounds you do hear BUT they CANNOT bring back the sounds you are missing.

Many people suffering from a degree of noise induced hearing loss suffer from tinnitus.

Tinnitus is a permanent ringing or buzzing sound in the ears. Communication and enjoyment of television and radio is more difficult when you have tinnitus, you are unable to understand what is said or it is distorted due to the ringing/buzzing sounds. For more information on Tinnitus refer to the **Tinnitus Fact Sheet** on the *Creating Healthier Workplaces Website Noise Page* <http://education.qld.gov.au/health/safety/hazards/noise.html>

How can I manage noise in my workplace?

Examine quieter alternative work practices. The ultimate outcome is to help create a safer, low noise, working environment.

For further information regarding noise at work: **Reviewing Noisy Environments in Schools Fact Sheet** on the *Creating Healthier Workplaces Website Noise Page* <http://education.qld.gov.au/health/safety/hazards/noise.html>

Hearing Protection

Earmuffs and earplugs do not affect your hearing, they protect your hearing from damage.

They do not make your hearing more or less sensitive to noise but help protect your hearing from Noise Induced Hearing Loss.

For further information regarding hearing protection: *Creating Healthier Workplaces Website Noise Page* <http://education.qld.gov.au/health/safety/hazards/noise.html>

Leisure Noise

It is not just noise at work that can damage your hearing, noise you are exposed to in your leisure time can also be harmful.

To reach the safe daily noise limit, it takes on average:

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- using a lawnmower 48 minutes
 - using a leaf blower 1 1/2 minutes
 - using a hand held drill 15 minutes
 - using a chainsaw 14 seconds
 - attending a rock concert 8 seconds
 - listening to a loud stereo 4 1/2 minutes
 - riding a motorbike 4 1/2 minutes.

Hearing protection (earmuffs and earplugs) is not just for the workplace. Remember to protect your hearing whenever you are around loud noise.

Portable Music Players

I-pods, I-phones etc, produce very loud levels of noise directed straight into the ear. Experts recommend that to protect your hearing, you should use these devices for no more than 60 minutes per day at 60% of maximum volume.

For further information refer to the Portable Music Players Fact Sheet: *Creating Healthier Workplaces* <http://education.qld.gov.au/health/safety/hazards/noise.html>

Hearing damage diminishes quality of life regardless of how it is caused.

**Noise Induced Hearing Loss is Preventable.
Once your hearing is gone it will never come back.
Protect your hearing - you won't get a second chance.**