

# Facts About Noise-Induced Hearing Loss

Approximately 36 million Americans have hearing loss. One in three developed their hearing loss as a result of exposure to noise.

- Noise-induced hearing loss is caused by damage to the hair cells that are found in our inner ear. Hair cells are small sensory cells that convert the sounds we hear (sound energy) into electrical signals that travel to the brain. Once damaged our hair cells cannot grow back, causing permanent hearing loss.
- Hearing protection decreases the intensity, or loudness, of noise and helps preserve your hearing.
- Harmful sounds are (1) too loud and last too long or (2) are very loud and sudden.
  - For example, exposure to a one-time intense “impulse” sound such as an explosion, or by continuous exposure to loud sounds over an extended period of time, such as sitting too close during a concert (rock, country, symphony, or any genre of music).
  - You may encounter harmful sounds at work, at home, and during recreational activities. (If you work in a hazardous noise environment, speak with your supervisor or compliance officer about OSHA recommendations on your amount of noise exposure.)
- **Noise is dangerous if...**
  - You have to shout over background noise to be heard
  - The noise is painful to your ears
  - The noise makes your ears ring
  - You have decreased or “muffled” hearing for several hours after exposure
- The loudness of sound is measured in units called decibels (dB). Noise-induced hearing loss can be caused by prolonged exposure to any loud noise over 85 (dB).
  - 60 dB—Normal conversations or dishwashers
  - 80 dB—Alarm clocks
  - 90 dB—Hair Dryers, blenders, and lawnmowers
  - 100 dB—MP3 players at full volume
  - 110 dB—Concerts, car racing, and sporting events
  - 120dB—Jet planes at take off
  - 130 dB—Ambulances
  - 140 dB—Gun shots, fireworks, and custom car stereos at full volume
- **Protect your hearing, by...**
  - Wearing hearing protection when around sounds louder than 85dB for a long period of time. There are different types of hearing protection such as foam earplugs, earmuffs and custom hearing protection devices.
    - Contact your local audiologist for custom hearing protection devices.
  - Turning down the volume when listening to the radio, the TV, MP3 player, or anything through ear buds and headphones. (Visit [www.TurnItToTheLeft.com](http://www.TurnItToTheLeft.com))
  - Walking away from the noise.
    - And, other than hearing protection, do not put anything in your ear!

If you think you may have a hearing loss, visit [www.HowsYourHearing.org](http://www.HowsYourHearing.org) and click on the “Find an Audiologist” link to locate and set up an appointment with an audiologist in your area to get your hearing checked.