



Repeated exposures to loud machinery may, over an extended period of time, present serious risks to human hearing. I know because I suffer from a permanent hearing loss in my right ear from exposure to a loud noise.

The effects of noise on hearing are often underestimated because the damage often takes place gradually. Even if you have a hearing loss caused by loud sounds, repeated exposure can still cause more impairment.

Excessive noise damages the delicate

hair cells in the inner ear. This damage results in sensorineural (or nerve) hearing loss and often tinnitus (ringing of the ears). Dangerous levels of noise can come from working in noisy occupations or in engaging in dangerous recreational activities:

- Beware of loud recreational activities: video arcades, fireworks, concerts, shooting a gun, movie theatres, sporting events, motorcycles and loud music.
- Occupations particularly at risk for hearing loss from noise exposure are as follows: firefighters, police officers, factory workers, musicians, and construction/landscape workers, etc.

If you have to raise your voice to shout over the noise to be heard by someone within an arm's length away, the noise is probably in the dangerous range. Some of the warning signs of hazardous noise are as follows:

- You can't hear someone three feet away.
- You have pain in your ears after

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PROTECT YOUR HEARING

- If you work in an at-risk occupation, check with your employer to make sure they have adequately protected your hearing according to OSHA regulations.
- Limit exposure time to noise.
- Wear hearing protection when exposed to noise, such as foam or silicone plugs or muffs which can be purchased at a sporting goods store. An audiologist can make custom made earplugs specially designed for hunters, musicians, dentists, race drivers, and others exposed to loud sounds.
- At home, turn down the volume on the radio, stereos and MP3 players.

An Ounce of Prevention

Be alert to hazardous noise. Since prevention is so critical, make sure that your family (especially children), friends, and colleagues are aware of the hazards of noise. Remember: One-third of hearing loss is preventable with proper hearing protection.

PROTECT THE HEARING THAT YOU HAVE NOW!

—Adapted with permission from the Better Hearing Institute.

HEARING LOSS PREVENTION

By Audrey G. Freeman, Au.D., Doctor of Audiology

Noise is one of the most common causes of hearing loss, and one of the most common occupational illnesses in the United States. A single shot from a shotgun, experienced at close range, may permanently damage your hearing in an instant.

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- Beware of loud recreational activities: video arcades,

leaving the noisy area .

- You hear ringing or buzzing (tinnitus) in your ears immediately after exposure to noise.
- You suddenly have difficulty understanding speech after exposure to noise; you can hear people talking but you cannot understand them.