

Are You Protecting Your Child's Hearing Properly?

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Are You Protecting Your Child's Hearing Properly?

By Susan Dunn

Are You Protecting Your Child's Hearing Properly? by Susan Dunn, Personal and Professional Development Coach

5.2 million 6–19 year old have hearing loss directly related to noise exposure*. Don't let your child be part of this unfortunate group.

PEACE & QUIET

"Offer your child peace and quiet," says the Noise Center. "Noise poses a serious threat to children's hearing, health, learning and behavior." (And I can't think of an adult who functions well in a noisy environment either.) "Peace" and "quiet" usually go together because without "quiet" there can be no "peace."

Aside from turning down the TV and stereo, lowering your voice, and providing the opportunity for quiet time in both their work and leisure, take a look at the toys you allow your children to play with.

Fortunately my children didn't suffer hearing loss from the obnoxiously loud toys they played with, but I must admit I told them to quit for my sake, not theirs, and I was always standing a good bit father away from their toy than they were. One father I know immediately disarms any noise-making function on a toy his child receives, and this may not be a bad idea.

And because they're young doesn't work in this case. You might assume, for instance, that your teenager can take that 85 decibels (dB) music because he's a teenager, but that isn't the case. Children's ear canals are shorter than adults, and therefore more vulnerable to damage in this way.

A study conducted by the Henry Ford Health System found that many current toys, including tape recorders, bike horns, cap guns, and toy telephones, are not safe for your child's hearing. Of the 25 they tested, more than half of them made sounds higher than 115 dBs.

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According to The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, at 110 dB, the maximum undamaging exposure time is one minute and 29 seconds.

NOTE: In researching this article I found a variety of decibels, as well as length of exposure before damage and also read studies saying that individuals varied in their tolerance for noises. The data is not consistent, but will give you a range. Should you be wondering what protection to take when, ask your personal healthcare professional for medical advice.

PERMANENT INSTANT DAMAGE

The ear is more unforgiving than you may know. A loud enough noise can cause instant, permanent damage, some noises can cause damage if heard long enough, and there is also cumulative effect over time. Prevention is crucial because noise-induced hearing loss can't be corrected, and hearing aids don't do much good.

Sound is vibration and has three properties: intensity, frequency and duration. "Intensity" is what is measured in decibels (dBs). A measure called dBA indicates damage to hearing. The higher the dBA number, the greater the risk of damage to hearing. This is because intensity translates to pressure on the eardrum.

What sound has what dBs? There is a long list of dBs (which they equate with dBAs) on the League for the Hard of Hearing website (<http://www.lhh.org/noise/decibel.htm>), including various recreational and work situations. A noisy squeeze toy rates an alarming 135dB from them.

"Noise levels above 85 dB will harm hearing over time," they caution, and "noise levels above 140dB can cause damage to hearing after just one exposure." 140dB is also the pain threshold; most of us hearing a sound at this level will feel it as well. All values are approximate.

According to www.dangerousdecibels.org , harm can occur with 103 dBs after 7.5 minutes, 106 dBs after less than 4 minutes, 109 dBs after less than 2 minutes, and 115 dBs after around 30 seconds.

Here is a list of sounds and the decibels to give you an idea:

- 0 The softest sound a person can hear with normal hearing aka "hearing threshold"
- 10 normal breathing
- 20 whispering at 5 feet, broadcasting studio, rustling leaves
- 30 soft whisper, library
- 50 rainfall, light traffic, average home
- 60 normal conversation, air conditioning unit
- 80 alarm clock
- 85 noisy restaurant
- 90 city traffic
- 110–120 rock concert, speedboat, headphones on maximum
- 110 shouting in ear, baby crying, many power tools
- 120 thunder, jet takeoff at 200'
- 130–140 firecracker, gunshot, powerful car speakers

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·180 rocket launching

According to the Noise Center, musical toys measure over 110 decibels, comparable to many power tools.

TEENS

With your teenagers, pay special attention. So many of the things they love are not advisable:

Clubs and discos, 91 – 96 dBA +

Dance floor, 85 – 100 dBA

At the bar, 90 dBA or more

Personal stereo systems. 60 – 114 dBA

Rock concerts, 100 dBA or more average

Car stereos, up to 154 dBA in the car!!

Home stereo, 80 – 115 dBA

If you take your kids hunting or to the shooting range, take the hearing protectors along. Firearms are all high and a single exposure can cause permanent hearing loss. Examples, 12-gauge shotgun, 150–165 dB, shotgun, 163–172 dB, rifle, 143–170 dB. Most firearms start at 100 dB and can go as high

as 190 Db.

You may also assign your older child or teenage chores involving power tools which require supervision for safety, including hearing safety.

Also note than a firecracker can cause immediate damage.

RECREATION

Two other things children and teens like should be monitored. Noise levels at video arcades can exceed 100 decibels (similar to factory machinery), and computer games and stereo systems can go as high as 135 dB (the level of a jackhammer), with car stereos reaching up to 154 dB, and an action movie is generally beyond 90 dB.

No one knows exactly what level damages a child's ears, but the Noise Center's Rule of Thumb is: **IF YOU HAVE TO SHOUT TO BE HEARD THREE FEET AWAY, THE NOISE IS TOO LOUD AND IS DAMAGING TO YOUR HEARING.**

Don't let your child become a statistic. According to Dangerous Decibels, approximately 30 million Americans have hearing loss, and 50 million have tinnitus, an early indicator. According to a study done by Montgomery and Fujukawa in 1992, "Over the last 10 years, the percentage of 2nd graders with hearing loss has increased 2.8 times; hearing loss in 8th graders has increased over 4 times."

Check with your child's pediatrician for specific information. This is not medical advice.

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*According to the 3rd National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey [Niskar, 2000]. Reported on DangerousDecibels.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

1. Educate yourself about noise levels
2. Provide your child with peace and quiet
3. Make it clear you value peace and quiet
4. Counteract that "loud is cool"
5. Ask your local theater to lower decibel levels
6. Provide ear protection
7. Model good hearing protection
8. Include instruction the same way you do when you tell them brushing their teeth twice a day prevents tooth decay
9. Turn down the volume of everything at home and tell your child why you're doing it

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Hearing health resolutions for 2005

By Max Stein

Hearing health resolutions for 2005 by Max Stein

With a New Year upon us, the annual tradition of forming resolutions of self-improvement is definitely in season. While many articles about New Year's resolutions focus on things like careers, education or relationships, this article discusses your hearing health and what you can do to make it better.

For those of you don't give your hearing any thought, because you can hear just fine, make the resolution to have your hearing tested. In most cases, hearing loss is gradual, so you may not notice that you have hearing impairment until it becomes profound. A hearing test will give you peace of mind for the coming year. If your hearing is healthy, you won't have anything to worry about. On the other hand, if you have developed some hearing impairment, you'll be glad it was diagnosed early.

There may be some readers out there who know they are hard of hearing, but have done nothing about it. Fear, or a sense of loss could be holding you back from enjoying life to the fullest. Today's hearing aids possess advanced technology that can improve your hearing and your lifestyle. Best of all, they're smaller than ever. Some "completely in the ear canal" (CIC) models are virtually invisible. Resolve to overcome your fears about your hearing loss and schedule a consultation with a qualified hearing aid dispenser in your area. Once you face your fears and overcome, you'll be glad you made this resolution.

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Others reading this article may own hearing aids, but don't wear them. Or you may know someone like that. If this is your situation, resolve to find out why. Are your hearing aids uncomfortable? Do they not provide noticeable amplification? Are you concerned about what other people think? Do you think a hearing aid is a sign of advancing age? Whatever the reason is you don't wear your hearing aid, it needs to be addressed this year. There could be many reasons for these problems and a qualified hearing aid dispenser can address all of these questions. This year resolve to improve your hearing health.

Hearing is something many of us take for granted. Get your hearing tested or resolve your hearing health issues. This year, put your hearing health at the top of the New Year's resolution list!

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