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## **Listen Up: How Noise Can Harm Your Hearing**

**By Jane Lake**

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Listen Up: How Noise Can Harm Your Hearing  
by Jane Lake

The good news is that you don't have to lose your hearing as you age. The bad news is, you will – unless you limit your exposure to high noise levels. The most preventable cause of hearing loss is the cumulative effect of noise. The following suggestions and decibel (dB) chart will help you gauge your exposure to noise and reduce your risk of hearing loss:

- \* Wear ear plugs when operating noisy equipment (i.e. lawn mower, motorboat or power tools).
- \* Set car, home and portable stereos to below half volume. Beware of music levels in exercise classes, concerts and bars.
- \* Look for a product recommended for quiet operation when shopping for a fan, air conditioner or other household appliance.
- \* Don't buy noisy toys. Some toy musical instruments emit dangerous sound levels, while cap guns and firecrackers, exploding near the ear, can damage hearing even if you only

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hear them once.

\* Any noise which makes your ears ring, a condition called tinnitus, is too loud.

\* Protect your ears if you hunt or shoot guns. Acoustic trauma – immediate, severe and persistent hearing loss – is directly linked to gunfire.

\* If your workplace is noisy, ensure that ear protectors are provided, and wear them.

\* Make sure printers, copiers and other noisy office machines aren't grouped together.

\* Wear ear plugs at rock concerts.

\* Avoid places where you cannot talk comfortably with

another person who is three feet away.

\* Wear ear protectors for loud hobbies like snowmobiling or woodworking.

How Loud is Too Loud? Use this Decibel Chart to Gauge Noise Level Effects

Normal breathing, 10 dB – Just audible

Quiet office, refrigerator, 50 dB – Comfortable

Vacuum cleaner, hair dryer, inside a car, 70 dB – Intrusive, interferes with telephone conversation

Average city traffic, alarm clock, 80 dB – Annoying, intrusive, interferes with conversation

Electric razor, many industrial work places, 85 dB – Level at which hearing damage (8 hours) begins

Subway, motorcycle, lawn mower, 90 dB – Very annoying

Average portable cd player set above half volume, 95 dB – Repeated exposure risks permanent hearing loss

Chain saw, subway train, garbage truck, 100 dB – Damage after 15 minutes exposure

Inboard motorboat, power saw, highly amplified rock music, pneumatic drill, 110 dB – Regular exposure of 1 minute risks permanent hearing loss

Thunderclap (nearby), jet engine (at take off), very loud nightclub, 120 dB – Threshold of pain

Shotgun firing, air-raid siren, 130 dB – May cause acoustic trauma

Chart Source: Canadian Hearing Society Foundation

Noise pollution is increasing, with city noise doubling every decade. However, by limiting the noise that you and your children are exposed to, you can help protect yourself,

and them, from future hearing loss.

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About the Author: Jane Lake is a professional feature writer whose articles has appeared in Canadian Living, Exchange Business Magazine, Highlights, Modern Woman, and You. She is the editor and publisher of the popular craft site, <http://www.allfreecrafts.com>, and <http://www.allfreeprintables.com> which offers printable recipe cards, shopping lists and more.

## **When Should Hearing Be Tested?**

### **By ARA Content**

(ARA) – What? ... I'm sorry I couldn't hear you? ... Could you repeat that? ... What did you say?

If these are the questions you ask when talking with others, then it's likely you need to have your hearing tested.

If you're wondering why your friends mumble when they talk to you or when restaurants suddenly become cacophonous, frustrating places, have your hearing tested. If your family consistently turns the television volume down when you're through watching it, have your hearing tested. If phone conversations are confusing or you find yourself having to concentrate on a speaker's lips to understand what they're saying, have your hearing tested. If you haven't had a hearing test since high school ... have a hearing test.

The statistics of hearing loss are compelling: One out of 10 Americans has hearing loss. By age 65, one out of three people has hearing loss. And of these, only one out of five actually seeks help.

That's unnecessary — and unfortunate — because there is help available. In a recent survey performed by the National Council on the Aging, hearing loss, left untreated, has a correlative relationship with debilitating psychological problems like depression, social anxiety and decreased social activity. The longer you ignore your hearing loss, the worse the physical, psychological and social effects. While noise-induced hearing loss is painless, it is permanent.

Nip potential hearing loss in the bud. Have your hearing tested. Doing so early may prevent damage or further damage to your hearing.

### **The Warning Signs**

Usually, hearing loss is painless and gradual, typically developing over a period of 25 to 30 years. Without some qualitative test, you won't realize you're losing your hearing till it's too late. There is a degree of hearing loss associated with aging, and infections, sudden loud or prolonged noise, diseases (like Meniere's disease) or genetic disorders (like otosclerosis), medical conditions (like diabetes), even a build-up of ear wax can mean hearing loss.

Here are some warning signs to watch out for: Pain or ringing in your ears (tinnitus) after exposure to

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noise Muffled speech sounds or music sounds dull after leaving a noisy area Difficulty understanding speech in crowded situations Difficulty in pinpointing sounds' locations (loss of stereo hearing) Frequently mispronouncing words Frequently asking people to repeat themselves

You'll be asked a series of more involved questions when you get your hearing tested. If you experience any of the above symptoms, you know what to do get your hearing tested.

### Who Should I Talk To?

You need to see an audiologist, a professional who specializes in hearing health care. Audiologists are trained to conduct and interpret hearing tests, fit and dispense hearing aids, provide related counseling, habilitation, rehabilitation and hearing conservation.

Your audiologist will help you make an informed decision about your hearing care and provide you with communication strategies to help make listening easier. Typically this type of hearing evaluation is covered by insurance.

Surprisingly, most people who struggle with hearing loss think they're unusual. Hearing loss doesn't have to mean depression, frustration and social anxiety — an audiologic rehabilitation program can train you to deal with your new situation, and an audiologist can help you find one.

Have your hearing tested as soon as possible, and talk to your audiologist about how often to test your hearing. You'll have a great chance of learning how to deal with hearing loss before it becomes debilitating.

### Where To Start

If you think you have hearing loss, there are great resources to help you. In addition to undergoing an annual hearing test, check out the Audiology Awareness Campaign at [www.audiologyawareness.com](http://www.audiologyawareness.com) or call 1-888-833-EARS for a free 15-page booklet called "Listen Up, America ... We Hear You" and a free set of ear plugs.

; e-mail:

### When Should Hearing Be Tested?

Hearing Impaired in the Workplace

Ten Things to Know About Your Child and Hearing Loss

How to Deal with a Noisy Neighbor

Six things You Can Do to Protect Your Child's Hearing

Obesity and Weight Loss

The Wonderful World Of Podcasting

Newbie's Guide to Stop Spam

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