

## Have WISE EARS!<sup>®</sup> for life

### Protect yourself and your family from noise-induced hearing loss

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#### Who should worry about noise?

Everyone. No matter how old or young you are, too much exposure to loud noise can permanently damage your [hearing](#). Whether it's the screech of a chain saw, the sudden blast of a hunting rifle, or the roar of a lawn mower, exposure to loud sounds can cause [Noise-Induced Hearing Loss \(NIHL\)](#).



At Home

At Work

NIHL is serious. Some 30 million people are at risk in the workplace, in recreational settings, and at home. In fact, it is the most common work-related disease. Already, 10 million Americans have permanently damaged their hearing.

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#### What is the WISE EARS!<sup>®</sup> campaign?

To help prevent NIHL, the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) has teamed with the National Institute

for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and more than 60 diverse national organizations to create the WISE EARS!<sup>®</sup> health education campaign. WISE EARS!<sup>®</sup> is spreading the word that:

- Hearing Matters;
- NIHL Is Preventable; and
- WISE EARS!<sup>®</sup> Will Last a Lifetime.

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### **How can I prevent NIHL and have WISE EARS!<sup>®</sup> for life?**

No matter what kinds of work and recreation are a part of your life, you can take steps to prevent NIHL.

- Know How Much Noise Is Too Much
- Protect Your Hearing in Noisy Environments
- Tell Others How to Prevent NIHL
- Contact WISE EARS!<sup>®</sup> Coalition Members for Assistance

**At the WISE EARS!<sup>®</sup> Web site:**

- Visit the Kids and Teachers Page
- Play with the Interactive Sound Ruler
- Hear 30-second Radio Spots
- Find Coalition Members
- Explore Classroom Activities
- Watch "What Is Sound" (video)
- Get Answers to Hearing Questions
- Read About Coalition Activities

[www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/wise/](http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/wise/)

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### **How much noise is too much?**

Sounds louder than 85 [decibels](#) (dB) can damage your ears. A decibel is a unit that measures the intensity of sound on a scale from zero to 150. A normal conversation is about 60 dB. Chainsaws, hammer drills, and bulldozers ring in at over 100 dB. So if you are a construction worker, harmful sounds may be a regular part of your job. The same goes for people working around lawn mowers and factory machinery every day. Airport workers and farmers are two more groups that are regularly exposed to loud noise. However, loud noise does not have to be an everyday happening to cause damage. One-time exposure, such as the sound of a gun firing at close range, can harm your ears permanently.

See the [How Loud Is Too Loud bookmark](#).

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### **How can I protect my hearing in noisy situations?**

Wear ear plugs or special earmuffs when you are exposed to dangerous levels of noise; they can keep your hearing from being damaged. Hearing protection is important any time you're exposed to loud noise.

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### **Where can I buy hearing protection devices?**

Several different types of protective plugs and muffs are available in most pharmacies, hardware stores, and sporting goods stores.

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### **What should I tell others about hearing protection?**

You can share what you know about NIHL with your family, friends, classmates, and co-workers. If you have children, explain to them that hearing is delicate and important. Call their attention to sounds that are harmful. Encourage them to protect their ears by avoiding loud noises or using special ear muffs. If they are too young to protect themselves, do it for them. For your co-workers and other family members, make a copy of this flyer and share what you know about NIHL.

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### **How can I contact WISE EARS!<sup>®</sup> coalition members?**

Many organizations are committed to preventing NIHL. They can answer questions, offer suggestions, and provide printed or electronic information. Contacting any of the following organizations can be very helpful. Or you may visit the WISE EARS!<sup>®</sup> Web site at [www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/wise/](http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/wise/) or call us toll free at (800) 241-1044 for additional addresses and phone numbers.

**The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)**, a Federal agency, offers publications and other information to anyone interested in work-related hearing loss. NIOSH publications focus on both general issues, such as practical guides to preventing hearing loss, and specific issues, such as noise levels in underground coal mines. Call 1-800-35-NIOSH or visit [www.cdc.gov/niosh](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh).

**The National Hearing Conservation Association (NHCA)**, an association of hearing conservation professionals, distributes and exchanges information on NIHL. Call (303) 224-9022 or visit [www.hearingconservation.org](http://www.hearingconservation.org).

**The American Tinnitus Association (ATA)** is a nonprofit group offering services to people with tinnitus (ringing in the ears). Education, information, hearing-health referrals are available. Call 1-800-634-8978 or visit [www.ata.org](http://www.ata.org).

**Hearing Education and Awareness for Rockers (HEAR)** is a nonprofit

group dedicated to educating people about the dangers of exposure to loud music. HEAR provides many services, including custom hearing protection, hearing testing, and outreach to increase public awareness. Call (415) 431-3277 or the 24-hour hotline at (415) 773-9590. Visit the Web site at [www.hearnet.com](http://www.hearnet.com).

If you have more questions about NIHL, want a full list of WISE EARS!® coalition members, or would like a WISE EARS!® information packet, call NIDCD at 1-800-241-1044. NIDCD and the WISE EARS!® campaign can also be reached on the Web at [www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/wise/](http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/wise/).

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National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders  
National Institutes of Health  
31 Center Drive, MSC 2320  
Bethesda, MD USA 20892-2320  
E-mail: [nidcdinfo@nidcd.nih.gov](mailto:nidcdinfo@nidcd.nih.gov)

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