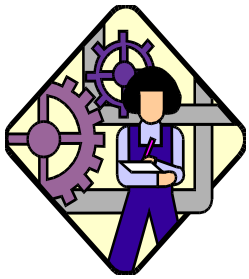
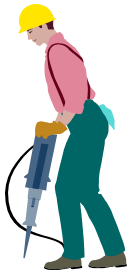
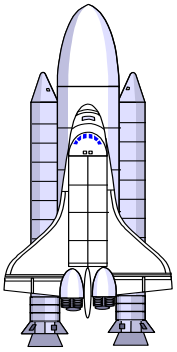
2000 HEARING CONSERVATION TRAINING





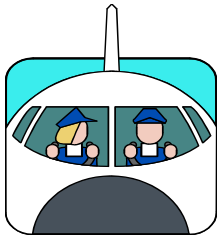
Most people lose their hearing gradually over the years, both because small hair cells in the inner ear die off naturally, and because regular and repeated noise exposure damages the wonderfully complicated and intricate hair cells of the inner ear. Your ears lose the ability to interpret sound vibrations as words, music, or other sounds. Unlike the hairs on top of your head, hair cells in your inner ear cannot grow back because they are such highly developed end-stage cells. Hearing loss is not just the ability to sense sound. Impaired pitch resolution, for example, means that your ear doesn't sort out complex sounds in speech, so the brain receives a sort of mishmash. Typically, the first to be affected are high tones, which include many of the most common sounds in spoken English.

"Baby Boomers", now in their 40's and 50's, are the first generation to be raised on rock-n-roll, the development of super-loud amplifiers, gas-powered lawn mowers, traffic gridlock, etc. The baby-boomers who have been exposed to all of this are just now beginning to show up at their doctor's offices for hearing checks, and the results indicate that many have premature hearing loss in the higher frequencies. From 1971 to 1990, hearing problems among those ages 45 - 64 jumped 26%. An example is President Clinton, who is one of the first presidents to have to wear hearing aids in his ears - at least occasionally. Also, a 1999 AMA study reported that nearly 15% of school-aged children had premature hearing deficits.

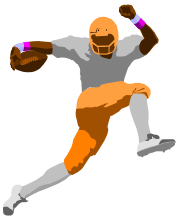


Because loud noise doesn't cause pain until the sound reaches VERY high decibels, people generally don't recognize noise as damaging until after the fact. If your ears hurt when noise rose above a safe level, everyone would be more cognizant of the threat. But it doesn't take much to start a gradual damaging effect that can lead to partial or total hearing loss.

Some common decibel levels for everyday activities are:

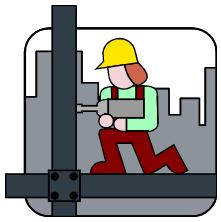


Air Travel
99 dB

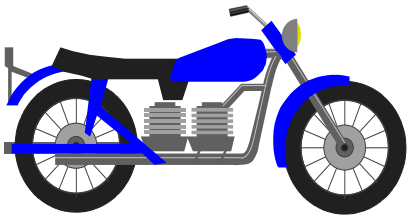


Sporting Event
100 dB

Mowing Lawn
101 dB



Construction Site (Powered Tools In Use)
107 dB



Motorcycle Riding
112 dB

When evaluating these decibel levels, please keep in mind that a sound of 110 dB is *ten times stronger* than a sound of 100 dB.

HEARING PROTECTORS - YOUR EARS BEST FRIENDS - Hearing protectors act as barriers to reduce sound entering the ear. Wearing them now is your best insurance for hearing well in the future. Choose disposable plugs, reusable plugs, headband plugs, or muffs. Each of these types has a noise reduction rating which tells how much the protector lessens the noise - usually 20 - 29 dBA.

Guard against hearing loss by wearing hearing protection whenever you encounter excessive noise at work. In general, hearing protection is needed if you have to shout to be heard. Also, hearing protection should be worn at home when you are:

* Operating a powered lawn mower * Hunting or target shooting

* Attending an auto race * Operating power tools in your garage

* Attending a rock concert * Riding a motorcycle

Good hearing is priceless, and greatly enhances your quality of life. Once your hearing is damaged, it may stay that way forever. So the precautions that you take today to protect your hearing will pay dividends for the rest of your life!