

Protecting Your Children's Hearing

Noise-Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL) is caused by exposure to loud sounds and usually occurs painlessly over a period of time. However, it may occur from one exposure to an extremely loud noise. Research suggests that NIHL is occurring at younger ages and with more frequency. Noise from personal headphones, jet skis, concerts, lawn equipment, power tools, firecrackers, household appliances, toys and musical instruments all have the potential to cause hearing loss. NIHL can be prevented. Teach your children to know when loud is too loud.

It's too loud if...

- You must raise your voice to be heard.
- You have difficulty understanding someone who's an arm's length away.
- You have pain, ringing or buzzing in your ears after exposure to loud sounds.
- Speech sounds muffled or dull after noise exposure.

Here are some simple prevention steps:

- Avoid and limit periods of exposure to noise.
- Buy quiet! Don't buy noisy appliances, equipment or toys.
- Don't put objects in the ears such as cotton swabs.
- Monitor hearing when ototoxic drugs are prescribed.
- Wear hearing protectors:
 - **Ear plugs** can totally block the ear canal. They come in various pre-made shapes and sizes, or they can be custom-made by taking an impression of the ear. Ear plugs can reduce noise 15-30 dB depending on how they are made and fit.
 - **Ear muffs** fit completely over both ears. They must fit tightly so that sound is blocked from entering the ears. Like ear plugs, they can reduce sound 15-30dBs.

courtesy of asha.org