

THE IMPORTANCE OF HEARING CONSERVATION

Thirty million Americans experience dangerously loud noises on a regular basis.¹ This runs the gamut from concerts and televisions to airplanes and clogged roadways.

Noise is often simply something happening in the background we feel we have no control over. However, knowing how sound can be harmful and how to protect yourself from its adverse effects can be an important factor in your overall well-being.

DANGEROUS DECIBELS



A phone ringing in a quiet room may sound loud, but that same sound in a crowded room may not even be heard. The ringing phone has not changed in intensity, only the perception of how loud it is. Sound is measured in decibels (dB), which registers how intense a sound is—not how loud it sounds. This perception shift can make dangerous volume levels seem safer than they are.

Intensity and duration are the key indicators when discussing hearing loss. A single loud noise near you—or repeated exposure over time to a less intense noise—can both be problematic.

For reference, a normal conversation measures around 60 dB, while a blender ranges from 80–90 dB. A motorcycle engine comes in anywhere between 95–110 dB, and a rock concert can reach 120 dB.²

Hearing loss can start with sounds at a mere 70 dB, so with the sheer quantity of loud noises in our modern world, caution is key.²

By the time you notice something is wrong with your hearing, it might be too late.

The average person has about 16,000 hair cells that bend with loud noises. Usually, they spring back into place after a period of recovery, but overwork can lead to damage or even death of cells which causes hearing loss. Anywhere from 30-50% of cells can be damaged before you experience any hearing loss. Other parts of the ear, like membranes and nerves, can be damaged and lead to a loss of hearing too.³

Loud noise can cause other health problems ranging from low-quality sleep and additional stress all the way to high blood pressure and heart disease.⁴ These consequences are often overlooked but are nevertheless worth considering.

WHAT'S AT STAKE



TIPS TO REMEMBER



There are some simple preventive steps you can take to decrease the impact of noise. Here are five simple, effective tips:

- Turn the volume down.
- Use hearing protection.
- Walk away from the loud noise.
- Take breaks from the noise.
- Limit exposure to loud activities and places as much as possible.

Being smart about hearing health and taking precautions when necessary is a lifelong endeavor. But being vigilant is worth it because hearing loss is not reversible.

¹Victory, Joy. "What is noise pollution?" *Healthy Hearing*, 2020

²"Common Noise Levels—How Loud is Too Loud?" *International Noise Awareness Day*, 2021

³"How Does Loud Noise Cause Hearing Loss?" *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, 2020

⁴"Noise Pollution." *National Geographic*, 2022