

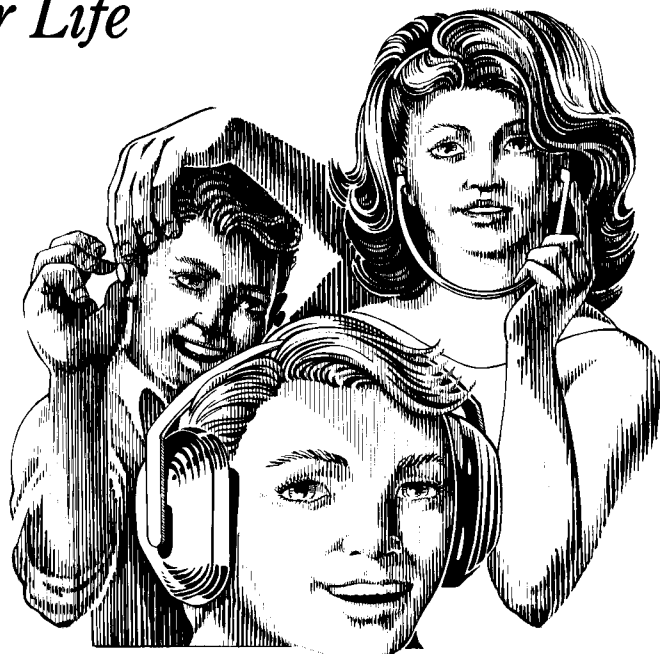
NOW HEAR THIS...

Protect Your Hearing For Life

Hearing loss can be so subtle that often we don't realize our impairment until it is too late. Repeated exposure to too much noise can result in gradual hearing loss, but how much noise is too much? Noise is measured in units called decibels or dBAs. (A normal conversation is measured at approximately 60 dBAs.) Excess noise is generally considered to be exposure to 85-90 dBAs or more over an 8-hour period. Over time, excessive noise exposure can result in permanent hearing loss.

The Mechanism Of Hearing

The ear is composed of numerous delicate structures designed to carry sound waves to the brain. The hair cells in the inner ear are particularly important because they stimulate the auditory nerve which transmits impulses to the brain. The brain then translates these auditory impulses into the sounds that we hear. When the ear's hair cells become damaged due to excess noise exposure, the auditory nerve is not sufficiently stimulated, the brain does not receive the appropriate sound signal, and we fail to hear correctly.



Ear plugs, muffs, or canal caps can help you protect your hearing.

Measuring Noise Levels

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has established limits for noise exposure on the job. Your employer can determine the level of noise in your particular work area with a noise dosimeter (which measures total noise exposure over a specific period) or a sound level meter (which measures noise levels periodically).

Hearing Testing

If you work in an area with excessive noise levels (over 85-90 dBAs in an 8-hour period), you are required to have your hearing tested annually with a device called an audiometer. This test checks your initial hearing level and any subsequent changes.

Hearing Protectors

You may also need to wear hearing protectors (plugs, muffs) with the appropriate noise reduction rating (NRR) for your type of work. Your employer is required to provide you with these protectors, but *you* are responsible for wearing them to protect your hearing.



An audiometer checks your initial hearing level and any subsequent changes.

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