HEARING GUIDE
PREPARED FOR HEARING HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

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HEARING CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
In both on- and off-duty settings, hearing is an important element of life.

**ON DUTY**
- Situational awareness
- Survival
- Teamwork
- Operational planning and execution
- Response to commands
- Communication
- Unit safety
- Mission accomplishment

**OFF DUTY**
- Personal relationships
- Conversation
- Laughter
- Sounds of nature
- Music
- Team and community activities
- Television and movies

**POTENTIAL IMPACT OF HEARING LOSS**
- Social isolation
- Depression
- Chronic disease
- Decreased operational effectiveness
- Reduced productivity
- Decreased quality of life
NOISE-INDUCED HEARING LOSS (NIHL) AND TINNITUS

can result from exposure to noise that:

• Is too loud
• Is too close
• Lasts too long

WARNING SIGNS OF UNPROTECTED EXPOSURE to hazardous noise include:

• You can’t hear normal speech within three feet of you
• You have a feeling of “fullness” in your ears after leaving a noisy area
• You hear a ringing or buzzing in your ears immediately after exposure to noise
• You have difficulty understanding speech after exposure to noise

NIHL IS INVISIBLE, PAINLESS, PROGRESSIVE, AND PERMANENT. It can result from:

• Sudden, one-time exposure to high intensity noise
• Repeated or prolonged exposure to excessive noise

YOU MIGHT HAVE NIHL IF:

• Sounds seem distorted or muffled
• You have problems hearing over the telephone
• You have trouble following conversation, if two or more people talk at the same time
• You have to turn the TV volume up high
• You have to strain to understand conversation
• You have trouble hearing in a noisy background
• You find yourself asking people to repeat themselves
• Many people you talk to seem to mumble or not speak clearly
• You misunderstand what others are saying and respond inappropriately
• You have trouble understanding the speech of women and children
• People get annoyed because you misunderstand what they say
Some of the noisiest occupations in the United States include:

- Agriculture
- Mining
- Manufacturing
- Construction
- Military service

POTENTIAL noise levels of service-related occupational noise include:

- Jet engines: 155 decibels
- Gunfire: 160 decibels
- Bomb blasts: 175 decibels

Some common recreational activities and their POTENTIAL noise levels include:

- Motorboats: 85 - 115 decibels
- Snow mobiles: 99 decibels
- Motorcycles: 105 decibels
- Personal listening devices with headphones: 105 - 120 decibels
- Video arcades: 110 decibels
- Movie theaters: 118 decibels
- Health clubs and aerobic studios: 120 decibels
- Live music concerts: 120 decibels and beyond
- Sporting events: 117 - 139 decibels
- Firecrackers at an average distance of 10 feet: 125 - 155 decibels
- Gunshots: 160 - 170 decibels

**HEARING LOSS PREVENTION STRATEGIES**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>EARS²U</th>
<th>STRATEGY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATE</td>
<td>Learn what noises are hazardous (85 dBA or greater).</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADJUST</td>
<td>Turn down your personal listening equipment.</td>
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<td>RECOGNIZE</td>
<td>And reduce noise hazards.</td>
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<td>SELECT</td>
<td>Wear hearing protection devices (HPDs), ear plugs, or noise muffs when you are exposed to hazardous noise.</td>
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<td>SEEK</td>
<td>If you notice ringing, fullness, and/or muffled speech, see an audiologist.</td>
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<td>UNDERSTAND</td>
<td>One-time and/or repeated, unprotected exposure to hazardous noise over a period of time can cause permanent inner ear damage.</td>
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NOISE HAZARDS AND REDUCTION STRATEGIES
The first key in preventing hearing loss is awareness. Knowing the risks can help you decide if you need hearing protection.

**THINGS TO CONSIDER:**
- Work environment
- Steady-state or intermittent noise
- Noise exposure levels
- Specific job and communication requirements

**TYPES OF HEARING PROTECTION:**
- Ear plugs
- Noise muffs
- Noise attenuating helmets
- Tactical communication and protective systems (TCAPS)

Consult with your audiologist or hearing healthcare professional for specific recommendations.

**HEARING.HEALTH.MIL**  
*It’s a noisy world … Protect your hearing.*