



LISTEN UP!

Kids Are at Risk for Hearing Loss

Children live in a noisy world, moving from bustling classrooms and cafeterias, to listening to personal entertainment – music, games and videos – through blaring ear buds for countless hours during “down time.” This high level of noise exposure places children at risk for hearing loss.

Though many people associate hearing loss with the aging process, it is important to recognize that kids are at risk as well. In fact, more than **one in seven** U.S. children has low-frequency or high-frequency hearing loss in at least one ear.ⁱ

Hearing loss among children is not only common, it appears to be on the rise. According to a study by Dr. Josef Shargorodsky published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, there was a **30 percent increase in hearing loss in adolescents** (ages 12-19) between 1988 and 2006.ⁱⁱ

THE NEED FOR EDUCATION

Children’s ability to hear plays an important role in their growth and development. In addition to missing out on fully experiencing the world around them, children with hearing loss can experience serious consequences that can affect them throughout their lives.

According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, hearing loss in children can be linked to delayed speech and learning problems. Struggles to communicate may lead to social isolation and poor self-esteem. Hearing problems can even impact kids’ future job choices.ⁱⁱⁱ

Yet, parents remain unaware of many of the major risk factors for hearing loss. According to a national survey by EPIC Hearing Healthcare, less than half of parents correctly identified cumulative exposure to moderate noise and shorter term exposure to loud noise as risk factors for permanent hearing loss.^{iv} Children themselves are even less informed. According to a 2005 Web-based survey published in the journal *Pediatrics*, only 16 percent of teen and young adults have heard, read, or seen anything related to the issue of hearing loss.^v

Education on how to prevent hearing loss – and on the importance of prompt and complete treatment if hearing loss is detected – is critical. The earlier a hearing problem is identified and intervention begun, the less serious its ultimate impact.



Did you know?

The human ear is fully developed at birth and responds to sounds that are very faint, as well as very loud. Even before birth, infants respond to sound.

**HEAR BETTER
LIVE FULLY**



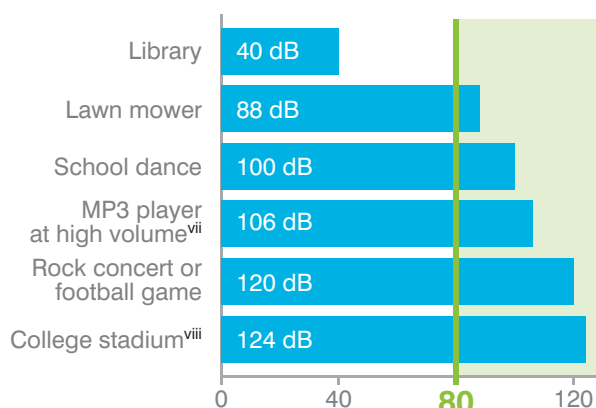
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THE ROLE OF NOISE

The most common and preventable contributor to hearing loss is noise. One-time exposure to a loud impulse sound or prolonged exposure to moderate noise levels can cause permanent hearing damage. **Noise levels above 80 decibels (dB) can damage hearing.**

Limiting children's noise exposure can significantly reduce their risk for hearing loss.

Noise levels of common kids' activities.^{vi}



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WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Turn down the sound! Children should be taught to limit the volume on personal listening devices. The settings of many personal listening devices can also be set for a maximum volume – this should be kept below 80 decibels.

Wear hearing protection. In very loud settings where it is not possible to control the sound, such as in movie theaters, at concerts and sporting events, and when running the lawn mower, kids should wear hearing protection.

Visit an audiologist for a full exam. Adults are encouraged to get their hearing checked every two years, but children should have their hearing checked annually. Some schools provide hearing screenings, but others do not. Remember, early detection is key. Although hearing loss is not curable, when caught early there are more treatment options to improve hearing and minimize further damage.

Make sure kids are covered. Many employees are ill-prepared when faced with the high cost of hearing aids; especially considering that 35 percent of parents incorrectly believe that children's hearing aids are covered by major medical insurance.^{ix} Supplemental hearing insurance can help cover the cost of hearing aids, but not many people are offered it. Employers can show their support of employees' overall health and wellness, as well as that of their families, by providing access to hearing benefit options and by educating employees on the importance of regular hearing check-ups for themselves and their children, and of seeking prompt treatment if hearing loss is detected.

To find out more about hearing health care benefits, visit www.epichearing.com.

Did you know?

From **\$.35 to \$1.75 per member per month**, hearing insurance is one of the most affordable benefits available for its value.

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ⁱ Niskar, A. S., et. al. (1998, April 8). Prevalence of hearing loss among children 6 to 19 years of age: the Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. *JAMA*, 279(14): 1071–1075.

ⁱⁱ Shargorodsky, J., Curhan, S. G., Curhan, G. C., & Eavey, R. (2010). Change in Prevalence of Hearing Loss in US Adolescents. *JAMA*, 304.7. <http://jama.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=186427>.

ⁱⁱⁱ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). (nd). Effects of Hearing Loss on Development. *ASHA - Hearing and Balance*. <http://www.asha.org/public/hearing/Effects-of-Hearing-Loss-on-Development/>.

^{iv} Listen Hear! 2013 Employee and Employer Perceptions of Hearing Loss and Hearing Loss Benefits survey. Employee survey conducted online by Wakefield Research on behalf of EPIC Hearing Healthcare between November 22 and December 13, 2013, among 1,500 nationally representative full-time employed Americans 18+, including oversamples of sub-audiences of up to 101 Hispanics, 110 African-Americans, 100 Asian-Americans, 169 teachers and 100 law enforcement professionals (all employed full-time).

^v NIDCD. (2012). Media Backgrounder: Noise Induced Hearing Loss and Tweens. Noisy Planet Campaign. Retrieved from <http://www.noisyplanet.nidcd.nih.gov/press/Pages/nihl-tweens.aspx>.

^{vi} Center for Hearing and Communication. (nd). Common Environmental Noise Levels Fact Sheet. *Common Environmental Noise Levels*. Retrieved from <http://chcheating.org/noise/common-environmental-noise-levels/>.

^{vii} How Loud is That? (2013). *Sound Sense*. Retrieved from The Hearing Foundation of Canada <http://www.soundsense.ca/Kids/HowLoudisThat/tabid/199/language/en-US/Default.aspx>.

^{viii} Zirm, J. (2014, September 12). The 7 Loudest College Football Stadiums, Ranked. STACK. Retrieved from <http://www.stack.com/2014/09/12/loudest-college-football-stadiums/>.

^{ix} Listen Hear! 2013 Employee and Employer Perceptions of Hearing Loss and Hearing Loss Benefits survey. Employee survey conducted online by Wakefield Research on behalf of EPIC Hearing Healthcare between November 22 and December 13, 2013, among 1,500 nationally representative full-time employed Americans 18+, including oversamples of sub-audiences of up to 101 Hispanics, 110 African-Americans, 100 Asian-Americans, 169 teachers and 100 law enforcement professionals (all employed full-time).