



## Tips to Protect Your Hearing

Would you be surprised to learn that noise levels on BART can hit 100 decibels? Did you also know that this is well above the 85 decibel threshold, used at work, for requiring hearing protection? In fact there are a number of common activities that can expose you to hazardous noise levels and which can damage hearing and over time lead to permanent hearing loss. Examples include: sporting events, concerts, use of personal audio devices and earbuds, leaf blowers, motorcycle riding, playing in a band, and use of power tools and each of these can damage hearing and over time lead to permanent hearing loss. This is why the proper use of hearing protection is so important both at work and at home.

For employees who are exposed to high noise levels at work, the Lab's Hearing Conservation Program provides ear muffs, ear plugs and other controls used to minimize noise levels. These workers also receive annual audiograms. Since hearing protection is so important, and because it applies to everyone, both on and off the job, here are a few simple things that everyone can do to protect their hearing:

1. **Talk to your children and family.** The National Institutes of Health has some great information you can share with family at <https://www.noisyplanet.nidcd.nih.gov/>.
2. **Use technology to raise your awareness.** There are a number of apps you can download that measure noise levels. If noise levels are over 85 decibels, you should consider using hearing protection.
3. **Have hearing protection available at home, in your vehicles so it is readily available:** You are more likely to use hearing protection if you have it readily available. And it is important to use it consistently whenever you are in a high noise area. Removing your hearing protection even very briefly can greatly reduce the amount of protection you receive. You can find ear plugs for 10 cents a pair at places like Amazon.
4. **Increase your distance from the noise source. As a general rule of thumb, for every doubling of your distance from the noise source, the noise level is reduced by 6 decibels.**
5. **Limit the amount of time you are exposed to noise, or reduce the volume.** Most smartphones allow you to set volume limits in Settings, and there are a few apps that allow you to set maximum noise levels on your device (search app stores for "volume control").
6. **Follow the 60/60 rule.** When listening to music with headphones or earbuds, limit sound levels to 60% of the maximum volume and listen for no more than 60 minutes.