

# Too loud

Noise-induced hearing loss is the only type of hearing loss you can prevent. If you understand the hazards of noise and how to practice good hearing health, you can protect your hearing for life. Here's how:

- Know which noises can cause damage (those at or above 85 decibels, such as a motorcycle).
- If you can't reduce the noise or protect yourself from it, move away from the source.
- Wear earplugs or other protective devices when involved in a loud activity, even Zumba class (activity-specific earplugs and earmuffs are available at hardware and sporting goods stores).
- Be alert to hazardous noises in the environment.
- Protect the ears of children who are too young to protect their own.
- Have your hearing tested if you think you might have hearing loss.

## About sound

Sound is measured in units called decibels. Sounds of less than 75 decibels, even after long exposure, are unlikely to cause hearing loss. But long or repeated exposure to sounds at or above 85 decibels can cause hearing loss. The louder the sound, the shorter the amount of time it takes for hearing loss to happen.

### Average decibel ratings of some familiar sounds

Humming of a refrigerator, 45 decibels

Normal conversation, 60 decibels

Noise from heavy city traffic, 85 decibels

MP3 player at maximum volume, 105 decibels

Sirens, 120 decibels

A good rule of thumb is to avoid noises that are too loud, too close, or last too long.

Firecrackers and firearms, 150 decibels