

## **Five-Minute Stress Relief.com**

### **Protecting Your Hearing**

Researchers report that the state of our hearing is fading away at a considerable rate. In fact, it's estimated that 20 million Americans have suffered permanent damage to their hearing from too much loud noise. Why? Because today's baby boomers grew up with a wide-range of loud mechanical machines, resulting in a big increase with hearing problems.

#### **The Sounds of Modern Life**

Just consider all the sounds of modern life: household appliances (vacuums, dishwashers, garbage disposal, hair dryers, etc.), alarms, loud cars, those dreaded motorcycles, diesel trucks, horns honking, tires screeching, trains squeaking, screaming babies, lawn movers, leaf blowers, helicopters, jet airplanes, airports and, of course, jackhammers.

Now add to that the sounds of entertainment: loud music speakers, loud music over ipod earphones; SUVs blasting rap music so loud that you hear it a block away; concerts and sports stadiums where you have to scream to the person next to you to be heard. The amount of stress our hearing is subjected to huge. It is a wonder we have any hearing left.

#### **Statistics**

And the statistics are overwhelming. Noise volume of 80 decibels (db) is classified as safe for all healthy adults. Over this limit, real damage can occur: 91db *no more than 2 hours*; 100 db *no more than 15 minutes*; 120 db – *nine seconds!*

And here are some samples of what we're being bombarded by: subway train, diesel truck, chain saw - 100 db (30 minutes causes hearing loss); rock concert, blasting music speakers - 120 db (ipod "earbuds" pump music directly into ear canal, result in quicker *permanent* damage; 6 minutes of sports arena noise = *81 times daily noise limit!*

#### **Hearing Impairments**

Researchers report that due to alarming frequency of high volume exposure, young people now have hearing impairments at *2 1/2 times* that of their grandparents. Remember Pete Townshend of The Who, famous for their blasting volume? Pete now warns fans to listen with a lower volume because he has hearing loss and tinnitus (a constant high-pitched whining, buzzing, hissing, humming, or whistling sound that seems to be coming from the outside, yet is really being generated within the person's sensory system) – a definite bummer.

#### **Guidelines for Protection**

##### **Noise-Canceling Technology**

When listening to music on earbuds, choose noise-canceling earbuds or noise-canceling earphones. By blocking out any extraneous background noise, they allow the listener to hear intense rock music at a lower, overall volume.

##### **Sponge Earplugs**

When attending a gym workout class with loud music, wear sponge earplugs that reduce noise levels by 29db. You'll still hear everything, without the damaging effects.

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### High-Fidelity Earplugs

For sporting events, rock concerts, loud action films, etc. prevent that ringing-in-your-ears effect (it's a sign of hearing damage) by using high-fidelity earplugs. They don't block the high and low range sounds of the music while they protect your hearing and even still enable to talk to your friend next to you. Prices range high for the custom-molded ones (they work better and last a lot longer) to relatively low prices for the ones at music stores.

### Power Tools / Loud Machines

When working with power tools, loud machines, etc., use sponge earplugs or foam earplugs that block at least 29 db. So if the machine is 85 db, the plugs will lower them to 56db, an acceptable level.

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**Sources: Protect Yourself from Noise-Induced Hearing Loss** ([www.aiha.org](http://www.aiha.org)) **Protect Your Hearing** ([www.nih.gov/news/WordonHealth/apr2001/story04.htm](http://www.nih.gov/news/WordonHealth/apr2001/story04.htm)) **Ear Plugs - Hearing Protection** ([www.webbikeworld.com](http://www.webbikeworld.com))