

DANGEROUS DECIBELS

Everyday sounds to watch out for

That jackhammer outside your window? It's more than just annoying. Loud sounds can actually cause permanent damage to your hearing. But what about everyday sounds like traffic? The telephone? The coffee grinder? Get the lowdown on decibel levels and learn what volumes are viable for your hearing health.

Nearby noise isn't always bad. Whether you consider them pleasant or peevish, these sounds aren't harmful—even if you do hear them all day long.

Safe and Sound

Whisper Refrigerator hum Rainfall **60 dB** Typical conversation Telephone dial tone

Typical piano practice comes in around 65 dB SPL. So if you're sick of hearing scales,

sorry. As far as your ears are concerned, Junior can go at it all day long...

to protect. Long exposure to these sounds can cause damage over time.

Heavy city traffic

environments. Safe—and stylish, too!

Idling bulldozer

The Borderline of Blaring

85 dB

The safety threshold for unprotected hearing is 85 dB SPL. At this level, be prepared

85 dB

Hair dryer

Say No to the Noise

OSHA requires hearing protection for workers in loud

protecting your hearing below.

90 dB

Emergency siren 125 dB

You may be surprised that some of these daily decibel sources can be damaging.

If you know you'll be around these noises, plan ahead. We offer a few proposals for

iPod at 50% volume Leaf blower 115 dB

101 dB

Fireworks ·

145 dB

Length and Loudness

After 85 dB SPL, your ears' tolerance diminishes quickly. The National Institute of

Safety and Health suggests these limits for loudness. (Look how much difference

190 dB

Gunshot

just a decibel or two makes!)

95 dB

1 hours/day

88 dB 4 hours/day

15 minutes or less

Plan to Protect

Muffle loud appliances

100+ dB

What can you do when loudness looms? When possible, follow Mom's advice and "turn down that racket." Lower volume settings and remove ambient noises when you can. In situations that are noisy by nature, go on the defensive.

(like a blender or grinder) with a towel



foam inserts

Wear earplugs or

85 dB

90 dB

2 hours/day

8 hours/day

Take breaks from the noise

Go back to basics: put your

hands over your ears