
WORKSAFE

► Noise Induced Hearing Loss

People are sometimes exposed to occupational noise that is loud enough or sustained enough to damage hearing. Hearing loss can develop so gradually that a person may not realize it is happening until it's too late — noise-induced hearing loss is permanent; it can't be cured or improved.

At levels above 85 decibels, noise can damage hearing. The length of exposure to noise is as critical as the volume. Continuous noise throughout a working day is more damaging than a few minutes of noise at a time.

Excessive noise damages tiny sensory cells deep inside your ear. The first danger sign of hearing loss is the inability to hear high-pitched sounds, such as children's voices. Other danger signs include a ringing or buzzing in the ears, some sounds becoming muffled or indistinct, and having difficulty in understanding conversation in groups of people when there is background noise, or in rooms with poor acoustics.

A person experiencing any of these early warnings should:

- Seek help from a family doctor who may make a referral to a specialist
- Avoid excessive noise or wear earplugs when appropriate
- Take breaks from the noise and give the ears a chance to recover

Adapted from: www.chha.ca/documents/Working_With_Hearing_Loss.pdf

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