



# Protecting your hearing

Hearing is important for our wellbeing and quality of life. Hearing loss can negatively affect people socially and emotionally and reduce their ability to get an education and find work.

Exposure to loud noise is a major cause of hearing loss. It is often preventable if you take steps to protect your hearing and get regular hearing checks.

## Noise injury

Noise injury is damage to the sensitive structures of the inner ear that can result in hearing loss. It is caused by sounds that are too loud or loud sounds that last a long time.

This could be a short, intensely loud sound or regular exposure to loud noises from headphones, speakers or power tools.

## Preventing hearing loss

**Reduce the volume** – turn down the volume of appliances you can control, such as music, TV and radio. You should be able to easily understand someone talking to you from one metre away.

**Limit your exposure** – avoid long periods of exposure to loud noise. Take listening breaks to limit your exposure.

**Protect your hearing** – wear hearing protection equipment when loud noise is unavoidable, such as noise reduction earplugs at loud events and earmuffs when using power tools.

## Noise risk at a glance

Sound is measured in units called decibels. Sounds of less than 75 decibels, even after long exposure, are unlikely to cause hearing loss. However, repeated or lengthy exposure to sounds at or above 85 decibels (approximately the level of a vacuum cleaner) can cause hearing loss.

Noise source	Decibel level	Length of time you can safely listen without protection
Music through earphones at maximum volume	106	Less than 4 minutes
Music at a concert	103	Less than 8 minutes
Riding a motorcycle	97	30 minutes
Using an electric drill	94	1 hour

## Other ways to protect hearing

**Be aware of the noise levels around you** – use the noise risk calculator on the National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL) website [knowyournoise.nal.gov.au](http://knowyournoise.nal.gov.au).

**Test regularly** – Use the online test on the NAL website, talk to a GP or book an appointment directly with a hearing clinic – you don't need a referral.

For more information on hearing, and how to book a hearing check, visit [health.gov.au/hearing](http://health.gov.au/hearing)