



Read the following text carefully.

Everyday activities like listening to an iPod, playing loud video games and going to the movies can put your hearing at risk. Loud noises can damage the inner ear. This type of hearing loss can't be healed. But **it** can be prevented. Find out how to protect yourself.

**Block, walk and turn--that's what hearing safety experts want you to do when you come across a really loud noise. Block the noise from entering your ears; walk away from it; and turn it down. Those are your first steps in staying safe (see "Dial It Down!").**

On average, 15% of all school-age children live with some hearing loss. And it's a growing problem. A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association in 2010 found a 31% rise from 1994 to 2006 in hearing loss among kids ages 12 to 19.

A 2011 study by Harvard Medical School did not find the same significant increase. But the Harvard study found that teenage girls have more hearing problems than teenage boys. The study did not track kids into adulthood.

### **Block It Out!**

Sound is measured in units called decibels. Decibel levels start at zero, which is near silence. An increase of 10 decibels means that a sound is 10 times more powerful. There are two types of harmful noises: sounds that are too loud and sounds that last too long (see "What's Too Loud?"). Both types can cause permanent damage to the sensitive hair cells in the inner ears that bring sound to the brain.

"Imagine a handful of pipe cleaners. **They** represent the hair cells in your ear," Andrea Boidman of Deafness Research Foundation told TFK. "Being exposed to a really loud noise is like shaking the pipe cleaners really fast. When you're done, the pipe cleaners are all bent. You can never really straighten them back to their original shape," **she** says. "That's like what happens with your hair cells. Once **they** are damaged, they never go back to being perfect again, and eventually the damage will start to affect your hearing."

Most people don't know that listening to headphones at full volume puts your ears at risk. "If your iPod is on the maximum volume, it's too loud," says Boidman. "If you listen to **it** at that level every day, it will cause hearing loss." Sometimes, staying safe and sound is as simple as turning it down.

### **What's Too Loud?**

Your body might try to warn you when a sound is too loud to be safe. You're probably at risk if you have to raise your voice to be understood by someone standing nearby, if your ears hurt, or if you hear a ringing in your ears even after you get away from the loud sound. Here are more ways to know if your hearing is at risk.

*120 decibels (an ambulance siren)*

Up-close exposure can cause hearing loss after nine seconds.

*110 decibels (a rock concert)*

Regular exposure of more than one minute puts you at risk for hearing loss.

*85 decibels (heavy city traffic)*

Prolonged exposure can cause gradual hearing loss.

*60 decibels (normal conversation)*

This is considered totally safe.

### **Dial It Down!**

Follow these simple steps to protect yourself.

- When you can't avoid loud noises, wear earplugs or earmuffs to block out sound. Earplugs fit inside your ears, and can be almost invisible. Earmuffs cover the outside of your ears, and are available in different designs and colors.

- Set your television or stereo to the lowest volume you can hear. If you are with a person who has trouble hearing, turn on the closed-captioning service to show the words on the screen.

- If your neighbors use noisy leaf blowers or lawn mowers, close your windows and doors to block the sound. **This** will also protect you from the sounds of sirens and construction. Add curtains to keep out noise, or carpets to absorb **it**.

By Andrea Delbanco

Source: <http://www.timeforkids.com/TFK/teachers/wr/article/0,27972,2045237,00.html>

**A) Say who or what the underlined words in the text refer to.**

- |               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| 1. It -----   | 6. They ----- |
| 2. You -----  | 7. It -----   |
| 3. It -----   | 8. This ----- |
| 4. They ----- | 9. It -----   |
| 5. She -----  |               |

**B) Match the words on the left with their equivalent on the right.**

- |             |                 |
|-------------|-----------------|
| loud •      | • harm          |
| damage •    | • imperceptible |
| safe •      | • noisy         |
| growing •   | • damaging      |
| harmful •   | • protected     |
| nearby •    | • increasing    |
| prolonged • | • close         |
| invisible • | • extended      |

**C) Answer the questions about the text.**

1. Give examples of everyday activities that put our hearing at risk.  
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2. Which are the two types of harmful noises?  
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3. Experts give some pieces of advice to protect ourselves from loud noise. Quote some.  
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4. Girls suffer more from hearing problems than boys.
  - 4.1. Find evidence in the text for this statement.  
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5. A researcher compares being exposed to really loud sounds to  
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