



# Teachable Moments about Healthy Hearing

You are your child's first and most important teacher. From the moment he or she was born, your child has looked to you as a role model. You have always looked for opportunities to teach your child about the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Even though your child may be older now, continue to look for teachable moments to help him or her learn how to prevent noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) and gain a lifetime of healthy hearing.

## What is a teachable moment?

A teachable moment is any spontaneous, or unplanned, event that you can use as a learning opportunity for your child. It's the moment when your child suddenly is open to learning about new ideas. Teachable moments are particularly effective because they give real-world meaning to the lesson you want to share. For example, it's much easier for a child to understand that noise can damage his or her hearing after an ambulance, with its siren screaming, has passed by.

## What are some teachable moments about healthy hearing?

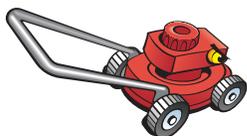
A teachable moment can occur almost anywhere — in your home, at school events, and during work and leisure time activities. One of the most common teachable moments happens any time you are exposed to potentially damaging noise levels and you take action. When you are mowing the lawn or doing carpentry, put on eye *and* ear protection. When you are motor-boating, hunting, or at a sports event, use hearing protectors. Recognize that your children often learn healthy behaviors through imitation. Let your children see YOU protecting your hearing.

Other suggestions about teachable moments are below.

- **When listening is enjoyable.** At almost any time of day and almost any place, you can share the pleasure of healthy hearing with your child. If your child comments on a bird singing or a favorite band playing, this is a teachable moment. Talk with your child about the beauty of sound and the way in which healthy hearing adds to our quality of life. Discuss ways to protect this valuable sense. Use the acronym "BAT" to help your child remember three ways to protect hearing:



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- Block the noise (wear earplugs or earmuffs).
- Avoid the noise (walk away).
- Turn down the sound.
- **When listening may *not* be enjoyable.** A good time to discuss why hearing needs to be protected — and how — is when the noise around you is too loud. A few examples of noisy situations are:
  - Waiting for a subway train.
  - Walking by a road with heavy traffic.
  - When doing yardwork or housework involving noisy appliances.
  - Attending a sports event.
  - Attending a concert.
  - Watching a parade.
- **When noise is in the news.** NIHL has received increasing attention in the news due to the possible damage caused by unsafe use of MP3 players and other personal music systems. Hearing protection has also been featured in news stories, such as when celebrities or their children wear earmuffs to protect their hearing while attending a concert. A photo of any professional wearing hearing protectors, including musicians, race car drivers, and construction workers, can be part of a teachable moment. Some news articles discuss the loudness of certain sounds, such as a whale's song or the noise levels in restaurants. Point out news articles involving sound and hearing to your child.
- **When buying toys that make noise, including music instruments.** Battery-operated toys, video games, and band instruments can create a lot of noise. When buying such things, discuss their safe use with your child. At the music store, point out the earplugs that professional musicians use to protect their hearing.
- **When your child makes a healthy hearing choice.** Is your child listening to the television at a reasonable level? Has he put on earmuffs to mow the lawn? Has she put in earplugs to practice her trumpet? Be alert to opportunities to praise your child for healthy hearing behaviors.

The National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) sponsors *It's a Noisy Planet. Protect Their Hearing*. This national public education campaign is designed to increase awareness among parents of children ages 8 to 12 about the causes and prevention of noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL). With this information, parents and other adults can encourage children to adopt healthy hearing habits before and during the time that they develop listening, leisure, and working habits. To find out more about how to protect your hearing and that of your family, visit the Noisy Planet Web site at [www.noisyplanet.nidcd.nih.gov](http://www.noisyplanet.nidcd.nih.gov).

For more information about your hearing and hearing loss, contact: NIDCD Information Clearinghouse  
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