



Teaching Kids about Hearing Protectors

“Tweens” are children ages 8 to 12, or those who are “between” childhood and adolescence. At this developmental stage, kids become more independent and spend more time without direct adult supervision. They also ask for a greater say in their activities, music, and clothes. Most important, kids continue to develop their own attitudes about their health. The habits they adopt now to protect their health, including their hearing health, can help them enjoy a better life.

Just as you want your child to wear sunscreen, use a seatbelt, and wear a bicycle helmet, you will want him or her to wear hearing protectors against excessive noise. Here are some suggestions for teaching kids about hearing protection so that they reach for earplugs or earmuffs as readily as they do for other protective gear.

- **Set clear rules for when hearing protectors should be worn.** Tell your child that you expect him or her to wear hearing protectors in noisy environments, even when you aren’t there to supervise. For example, is it time to mow the lawn or is your child going riding on a dirt bike? It’s time for your child to put on hearing protectors.
- **Be a good role model.** When you are mowing the lawn, using a leaf blower, or working with power tools, wear hearing protectors. Consider doing the same at sporting events, amusement parks, arcades, and other noisy places.
- **Teach your child how we hear and how excessive noise over time can cause noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL).** Visit the Noisy Planet Web site and use the materials in the “TweenZone” to help your child understand how he or she can help prevent NIHL.
- **Teach your child about noise levels.** Point out sources of excessive noise, like the siren of a passing fire truck or ambulance. Guess the decibel level, and look it up when you get home. Or buy a small decibel meter from an electronics store and carry it with you. You might be surprised to learn the noise levels of public areas or restaurants. In this way, your child will become more aware of excessive noise, where it occurs, and when hearing protectors may be needed. Learn more by reading the Noisy Planet publication, “Teachable Moments about Healthy Hearing.”



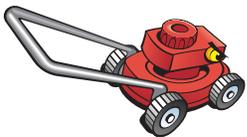
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- **Do some research with your tween about NIHL.** You and your child may be surprised to learn that some favorite celebrities have hearing loss or a ringing in the ears — called tinnitus — from excessive noise. Some rock and hip hop musicians are encouraging their fans to listen to music at safe volumes and to wear hearing protectors. The Web site for H.E.A.R. has more information about protecting the hearing of musicians and music lovers. If friends make jokes about wearing earplugs or earmuffs, your kid can say, “If (name of musician) wears them, there must be a good reason.”



- **Take your child shopping for hearing protectors, either online or in stores.** Discuss with your child whether he or she would rather wear earplugs that can be hidden by hair or a hat or wants to make a fashion statement with more noticeable hearing protectors. There are many fashionable, colorful, and comfortable styles of hearing protectors available.
- **Choose hearing protectors that fit in with your child’s daily activities.** Add earplugs or earmuffs to your shopping cart when you are outfitting your child for sports or band. Special musician’s earplugs are available so that your child can play an instrument loudly and clearly, but hear the music at a softer level. There also are hearing protectors designed specifically for hunting or shooting sports. Hearing protectors are available from many pharmacies, sporting good stores, hardware stores, and online vendors.



- **Help empower your child to make good decisions about hearing.** This can be as simple as teaching your child to:
 - Block the noise (wear earplugs or earmuffs).
 - Avoid the noise (walk away).
 - Turn down the sound.

Healthy hearing contributes to a safe and enjoyable life. Teach children about hearing protectors and why and when they are needed. You will be helping them to develop a habit that can protect their hearing now and in the future.



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.

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