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Why Teach Tweens about Noise-Induced Hearing Loss?

Tweens are at an age when they begin to act more independently. Now is a great time to teach them about protecting their hearing from noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL).

Children, just like adults, are at risk for NIHL. This type of hearing loss occurs when tiny sensory hair cells in the inner ear are damaged by noises that are too loud and that last for too long. NIHL can be permanent.

The ability to hear well helps children succeed in school, in sports and other activities, and in their personal relationships. Many sources of noise that can potentially damage the hearing of children are part of their daily, normal lives. Some potential sources of damaging noise include:

- Workshop tools and yard equipment
- Concerts of all music types
- Sporting events, hunting, and other leisure-time activities
- Trains, planes, all-terrain vehicles, tractors, and other vehicles
- School cafeterias and food courts

Most young people, however, are not aware of NIHL or how they can prevent it. In a survey conducted by the MTV website, only 16 percent of teens and young adults who responded reported

that they had heard, read, or seen any information on NIHL (*Pediatrics*, 2005).

Even when young people understand the risk of NIHL, they do not always follow through by adopting habits that protect their hearing. These habits are simple, such as turning down the volume on entertainment systems (e.g., MP3 players) or wearing earplugs or earmuffs in noisy environments. One study of college students found that even among those who knew about NIHL, almost three-quarters had never worn hearing protectors (*Journal of the National Medical Association*, 2004).

These examples show why it is important to teach children about the causes and prevention of NIHL early on, so that healthy hearing habits become a natural choice.

Tweens are at an age when they are developing as individuals and beginning to make some of their own choices. They are asking for a greater say in their after-school activities, music, and clothes. They also are developing their own health-related attitudes and habits, which can help or hurt their health for a lifetime.





This age is a perfect opportunity to encourage tweens to adopt healthy hearing habits *before and during* the time that they develop their own listening, leisure, and working habits.

Read the parent tip sheet *Teachable Moments about Healthy Hearing* at <http://www.noisyplanet.nidcd.nih.gov/parents/Pages/moments.aspx> to learn ways to introduce the topic to your tween.

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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 (tweens) 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 website at <http://www.noisyplanet.nidcd.nih.gov>.

For more information about your hearing and hearing loss, contact:

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