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What Is Noise-Induced Hearing Loss?

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Many enjoyable sounds that we hear every day are at safe levels that won't damage our hearing. However, sounds can be harmful when they are too loud—even for a short time—or when they are long-lasting, even if they are not quite as loud. These sounds can damage part of the inner ear and cause permanent hearing loss. This permanent hearing loss can then worsen over a lifetime.

Who Is Affected?

Hearing loss from noise can happen to anyone at any age. Analyses from nationally representative health interview and examination surveys found that about one in seven U.S. teens ages 12 to 19 years (13-18 percent), and nearly one in four (24 percent) U.S. adults ages 20 to 69 years has features of his or her hearing test in one or both ears that suggest noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL).



How Do We Hear?

To understand how loud noises can damage our hearing, we have to understand how we hear. Hearing depends on a series of complex steps

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