

# Opinion: Unplug yourself to avoid future hearing loss

By Ronald Roth

Noise induced hearing loss is irreversible, but preventable. Approximately 26 million Americans between the ages 20 and 69 have high frequency hearing loss from overexposure to loud noise at work or during recreational activities.

NIHL at a younger age is thought to accelerate age-related hearing loss.

Hearing loss is a common sensory disorder, affecting tens of millions of people of all ages in the U.S. Noise from concerts, iPods, stereos, firearms and sporting events can result in NIHL when repetitive exposure occurs. Harmful noises at home also may come from lawnmowers, snowblowers and shop tools.

## The plugged in generation

We have become a generation “plugged in” to amplified sound and high levels of noise from earbuds, headphones and video games. These can potentially damage the delicate structure of the inner ear, resulting in high-frequency hearing loss.

You can reduce noise exposure by:

- Limiting the time of continuous exposure to noise.
- Reducing the volume level.
- Wearing earplugs or earmuffs when shooting or running loud machinery. Special earplugs and earmuffs are available at hardware and sporting goods stores.
- Being alert to hazardous noise levels in the environment.

- Protecting the ears of children who are too young to protect their own.
- Making family, friends and colleagues aware of the hazards of noise that could be a detriment to them.

If you suspect you have hearing loss, have a medical exam by an otolaryngologist, a doctor that specializes in diseases of the ear, nose and throat.

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