Protect the sounds you love

Sound is powerful. Just think how you feel when you crank up your favourite song or the roar of the crowd as your team scores. We want you to keep enjoying that feeling for as long as possible – which means knowing how to enjoy your favourite sounds safely.

You can think of hearing protection a bit like sun protection.

Noise can harm your hearing in the short term – just like you can get sunburnt after being out in the sun for a few hours. If your ears have ever been ringing or your hearing has felt dull after being exposed to noise, then you've likely experienced the hearing equivalent of sunburn.

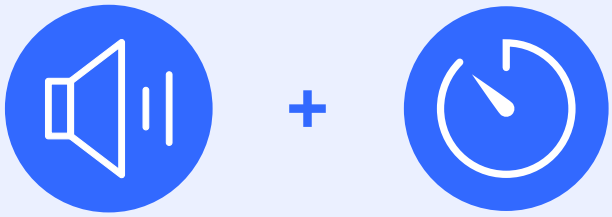
Just like your skin recovers from the short term effects of sunburn (redness and soreness), your ears can also recover from the short term effects of noise (ringing and dullness) – but as we know sunburn can cause lasting damage, so too can noise.

How loud is too loud?

The longer and louder you listen, the greater the chance of damaging your hearing[1]. The time you can safely listen to loud sounds without hearing protection quickly becomes less as the sound gets louder, for example:

85dB(A)	Busy road[2]	8 hours
100dB(A)	Nightclub[2]	15 mins
110dB(A)	Chainsaw[2]	1 min

If you need to raise your voice or shout to have a conversation, then the noise is probably too loud.



Protect your hearing by limiting:

- **How long** you listen to loud sounds
- **How loud** the sound is

Noise damage is cumulative

Like the dangers of sunburn, over time, if you continue to listen without protection, your ears may not fully recover, and your hearing may gradually become more and more dull. This is a noise-induced hearing loss.

The good news is that it's easy to protect your hearing

Just like you'd wear a hat or sunscreen if you went out into the sun, you should wear ear plugs or muffs when you are in a noisy situation, like a loud concert or using power tools. It's the combination of how long you're exposed, as well as how intense (loud) the noise is that can damage your hearing.

To protect your hearing:

- Take time out every now and then from a noisy workshop or other noisy activity.
- Wear ear plugs or muffs if you are exposed to industrial noise and loud machinery (such as mowing the lawn or using a circular saw), or attend loud venues like sporting events.
- When wearing ear muffs - it may be more convenient to leave your hearing aids in and turned on, provided they're comfortable and don't whistle. But it's fine to take them out too.
- Learn to fit ear plugs properly.
- If your workplace is noisy, talk to your Work Health and Safety Officer about making it quieter (there is a national standard for noise exposure in the workplace)[2].

Tips for safe music listening:

- Listen at a volume where you can hear someone who is at arm's length without them having to shout.
- Don't listen at 100% volume on your device – these levels can potentially cause damage after only 3 minutes (depending on the type of headphone you're using)[3].
- Consider limiting the volume on your device in the 'settings'.
- Limit the noise around you.
- Use noise limiting headphones so you don't have to turn your music volume up so high (just make sure you can hear warning sounds around you!)
- Take breaks from music venues to give your ears a break.
- Use ear plugs at music venues to protect your hearing.
- Use headphones output limited to 85dB such as the Puro children's headphones, available for purchase from your local Hearing Australia centre.

Use these tips to protect the sounds you love!

And next time you get your skin checked, why not jump online for a hearing check too? Go to onlineassessment.hearing.com.au

References:

1. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), 1998, "Basis for the Exposure Standard," in Publication No 98-126, Criteria for a Recommended Standard: Occupational Noise Exposure.

2. Australian Government National Occupational Health and Safety Commission, 2004, 'National Code of Practice for Noise Management and Protection of Hearing at Work' [NOHSC: 2009(2004)] 3rd Edition.

3. Keith, S. E., Michaud, D. S. & Chiu, V. 2008, 'Evaluating the maximum playback sound levels from portable digital audio players', Journal of the Acoustical Society of America, vol. 123, no. 6, pp. 4227-4237.