

October Is National Protect Your Hearing Month

KCDHH reminds Kentuckians that hearing protection is important at all ages

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Oct. 2, 2023) — Whether you are at work, home, school or an event, the Kentucky Commission on Deaf and Hard of Hearing (KCDHH) wants you to learn how to protect yourself and others from noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) during National Protect Your Hearing Month in October.

“Sometimes we take our hearing for granted until it’s too late. Noise-induced hearing loss is preventable by avoiding loud noises whenever possible or wearing earplugs to protect your ears,” said Gov. Andy Beshear. “As a Dad, I also encourage parents to monitor their children’s exposure to loud noises, especially from using earbuds at unsafe volumes.”

According to the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA), 12.5% of children between 6 and 19 years of age have hearing loss as a result of listening to loud music, particularly through earbuds at unsafe volumes.

People of all ages can develop noise-induced hearing loss. An estimated one in five American teens experiences some type of hearing loss, 33% of all Americans over the age of 65 have a hearing loss and the number one war wound for American veterans is hearing loss, according to the Hearing Loss Association of America. Kentucky ranks third per capita nationally in people identified as deaf or hard of hearing, according to the 2010 American Community Survey Data, U.S. Census.

In addition, noise-induced hearing loss is one of the most common work-related illnesses in the United States. Each year, an estimated 22 million U.S. workers are exposed to hazardous noise levels at work, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

Noise sampling is one of the many free services offered by KYSAFE that employers can use to improve the health and safety of their workplace. To find out more about noise sampling and other consultative services, contact 502-564-3070 or visit kysafe.ky.gov. For more information about occupational noise exposure, visit the U.S. Department of Labor [Occupational Safety and Health Administration](https://www.osha-slc.gov/).

“I urge employers to take advantage of our free, confidential KYSAFE consultation services to evaluate the health and safety of their work environment, including getting a noise sampling to detect hearing hazards,” said Kentucky Education and Labor Cabinet Secretary Jamie Link. “Prevention and awareness are the keys to protecting your hearing because once you have noise-induced hearing loss, there is no cure.”

The Kentucky Commission on Deaf and Hard of Hearing also recommends that everyone learn the signs of hearing loss and get a hearing test if they suspect they have a hearing loss. Noise is considered dangerous if you have to shout over background sound to be heard, it is painful to your ears, it makes your ears ring during and after exposure, or if you have decreased or “muffled” hearing for several hours after exposure. Most people do not know that noise exposure is cumulative so exposure to loud noise over time can also damage hearing.

Here are a few of the signs of hearing loss:

- Misunderstanding people;
- Asking people to repeat themselves;

- Difficulty understanding someone on the telephone;
- Speaking loudly; and
- Increasing the radio or television volume.

The average person is born with about 16,000 hair cells within their inner ear that allow the brain to detect sounds. When hair cells are damaged, they can't send information about sound to the brain. Since people can't grow new hair cells to replace damaged ones, hearing loss from noise is permanent.

If you take precautions, you can help prevent noise-induced hearing loss by making these simple lifestyle changes:

- Keep the volume low on music systems, smartphones, tablets, computers and TVs, and set maximum volume levels on devices used by children and teens.
- Avoid or limit exposure to excessively loud sounds.
- Move away from the source of loud sounds when possible.
- Be aware and limit noisy environments such as concerts, playing in a band, target shooting and hunting, using lawnmowers, leaf blowers and woodworking tools.
- Use hearing protection devices such as earplugs when it is not feasible to avoid exposure to loud sounds or reduce them to a safe level.
- If you're a parent, carry hearing protection for your little ones and be a hearing health role model by wearing them yourself.

“We need to address hearing loss early as it negatively affects people of all ages when left unaddressed. If you suspect that you or someone you love has a hearing loss, we urge you to get screened. The Kentucky Commission on Deaf and Hard of Hearing is here to help you navigate the many services and resources that are available to you,” said Anita Dowd, acting executive director of the Kentucky Commission on Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

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KCDHH, established in 1982, exists to serve the nearly 700,000 Kentuckians with a hearing loss and can put you in touch with appropriate resources and services to help minimize the negative impact hearing loss may have on your life. Books and videos on topics ranging from coping with a hearing loss to assistive devices, legal rights and parenting a child with a hearing loss are available through the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Resource Library.

For more information, contact KCDHH by calling 502-573-2604 (V/TTY), 502-415-0607 (VP) or email kcdhh@kcdhh.ky.gov. Visit KCDHH at www.kcdhh.ky.gov.

KYSAFE builds alliances with Kentucky employers to promote worker safety and health through high-quality consultative education and technical assistance. A consultative survey is a cost free and confidential workplace evaluation conducted at the specific request of an employer or employer's representative. The survey is conducted to assist employers in providing a safe and healthy workplace for their employees by identifying potential workplace hazards and violations of Kentucky Occupational Safety and Health standards. A safety and/or health consultant evaluates the workplace to identify occupational safety and health hazards, discuss specific problems and concerns, recommend methods of correction, and assess the effectiveness of the employer's safety and health program.