



Home, Community, & Recreational Noise

Exposure to damaging noise does not come only from the workplace. If you use personal audio devices, operate power tools for yard or house work, have a long daily commute in heavy traffic, or use a number of household appliances, you may be exposed to potentially damaging noise. Listening to noise levels regularly above 70 decibels (dBA) can cause hearing loss over time. The following recreational activities can be dangerous for the ears:

- Hunting
- Target shooting
- Motorboating
- Waterskiing or using a personal watercraft
- Snowmobiling
- Motorcycle riding
- Woodworking
- Listening to music

For personal listening devices, the World Health Organization recommends volume levels no higher than 80 dBA for adults and 75 dBA for children. Movie theaters, home entertainment centers, car stereo systems, health clubs, restaurants, sports stadiums, dance clubs, bars, and amusement centers may also pose a risk to your hearing.

In our day-to-day activities, we can also be exposed to damaging noise when we use lawn mowers, hair dryers, blenders, power tools, weed trimmers, leaf blowers, food choppers/processors, and other appliances.

Household Appliances Add Noise to Your Life
High noise levels can cause hearing loss, especially when you are exposed continuously. Exposure to even moderate levels of noise can cause annoyance and anxiety. Over time, it can damage hearing. To make matters worse, moderate levels of noise can also cause stress-related health problems, such as elevated blood pressure, fatigue, reduced sleep, increased frustration and anxiety levels, and even difficulty thinking.

Noise appears in places you don't even think about—like your kitchen. Audiologist Saralyn Gold, PhD, and students from the Department of Communicative Disorders at East Tennessee State University, measured the noise level of six different types of appliances in 10 different kitchens (see chart).
Appliance/Loudness Range (dBA SPL*)

Appliance	Loudness Range (dBA SPL*)
Blender with Ice	83.4-85.0
Blender with Water	80.9-86.5
Dishwasher	65.4-78.0
Electric Mixer	75.0-80.0
Pop-Up Toaster	66.6-84.5
Stove Fan	65.1-76.5
Vacuum Cleaner	81.1-94.5
*SPL = Sound Pressure Level	

All of the blenders mixed with ice, one mixer, one toaster, the majority of the blenders with water, and many of the vacuum cleaners made noise levels higher than 80 dBA and loud enough to cause hearing loss if exposed over a long period of time. One of the vacuum cleaners created noise higher than 90 dBA. Most of the appliances generated enough noise—more than 60 dBA—to create annoyance.

What Can You Do?

Make noise level a part of your buying decisions. Many appliances—dishwashers, fans, disposals, cleaners—create a wide range of noise. Check to see whether appliances come with decibel ratings, and check the ratings specified in consumer publications.

Express your concern about noise. When shopping, tell the salesperson that you do not want to buy brand X because of the noise. Write to the manufacturer.

You can also write to organizations, such as the Consumer Product Safety Commission, about the need for quieter appliances.

