



# Your Ears are **FRAGILE**

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LOOK AFTER YOUR HEARING.  
ONCE IT'S GONE, IT'S GONE.



NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR  
**Deaf & Hard of Hearing**

# Your ears are more fragile than you think.

Often you won't realise you've done damage to your hearing until it's gone.

Noise-induced hearing loss can occur at any age depending on how loud, how long and how often you are exposed.

All ears are different, and some ears are more fragile than others. It's impossible to know how rapidly or to what degree your hearing might be affected by noise.

It's never too early to look after your ears.

Join our Youth Advisors, Lily, Hope, Eleanor, Gaby and Maddie as they explore how our ears work, what happens when you go over your weekly sound allowance and how to look after your hearing for life.



# What happens to my ears when I listen to loud music?

It can help to think of the hair cells in your ears being like a fresh patch of grass and loud music being like a group of people trampling on the grass.



Before anyone walks on the grass, the blades stand upright and tall. But, as people continue to walk on the grass, the blades become flattened.

If people stop walking on the grass, some blades of grass might pop back up and stand straight again after a few days.



But, if people continue to trample on the same patch of grass, the grass begins to die, and the damage becomes permanent.

## How loudly are you listening?

When you listen to music at max volume on your headphones, (110dB approx.), you can only do so safely for a maximum of 1.5 to 6 minutes per week before your ears start to become damaged.

If you want to listen to music for life, it's a good idea to keep the volume under the halfway mark on your device (around 75 dB or lower).



# Did you know that your ears have a weekly sound allowance?



Think of your weekly sound allowance like a 10-litre bucket of water.



You can fill it up slowly over the week with just one or two litres each day.



This means you can keep listening to the sounds and music you love all week.



Or you can fill it up with 20 litres all in one go.



Filling the bucket up all in one go is like listening to music on max volume. When you go over your weekly sound allowance, you can start to do permanent damage to your hearing.

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## What are the first signs of hearing loss?

*Some of the first signs that you have damaged your hearing after listening to loud sounds are:*
















- Ringing in the ears
- Sore or sensitive ears
- Everything sounding muted or dull.

## Love listening to music? No problem! But, let's make listening safe.

If you want to keep enjoying music, it's important to be aware of how loud and for how long you can safely listen.

# Safe Listening weekly allowances

Are you wondering how much noise is too much? Check out the table below to learn more about your weekly limit.

DECIBELS		WEEKLY LIMIT*
115 dB - Loud Rock Concert 	115 dB	Protection required
110 dB - Max Volume on Smartphone 	107 dB	1.5 mins
104 dB - Garbage Truck 	104 dB	3 mins
101 dB - School Dance 	101 dB	6 mins
98 dB - Motorcycle 	98 dB	12 mins
95 dB - Hair Dryer 	95 dB	24 mins
92 dB - Shouted Conversation 	92 dB	48 mins
88 dB - Blender 	89 dB	1 hr 30 mins
85 dB - City Traffic 	86 dB	3 hrs 15 mins
83 dB - Busy Cafe 	83 dB	6 hrs 24 mins
80 dB - Dial Tone 	80 dB	12 hrs 30 mins
76 dB - Living Room Music 	77 dB	24 hrs
75 dB - Half Volume on Smartphone 	75 dB	40 hrs
65 dB - Typical Speech 	65 dB	40+ hrs
55 dB - Rainfall 	55 dB	40+ hrs

\*Sources: World Health Organization, University of Michigan Health.

# What can I do to keep my ears safe?

*It's pretty easy to look after your hearing once you know how to make listening safe. Here are 7 tips that can help you keep your hearing for life.*



**1.** Keep volumes as low as possible while listening to music – below the halfway mark

**2.** Ask a friend if they can hear your headphone music. If they can, turn the volume down

**3.** Never use music to drown out other noises

**4.** Wear earplugs. They help to reduce noise levels, which makes for safer listening

**5.** Give your ears a break from music for at least five minutes every hour

**6.** Pay attention to the warning signs of hearing loss, such as ringing in the ears

**7.** If you think it's too loud – it probably is

# Get a hearing health check up

*If you're worried about your hearing, don't wait. [Get it checked out.](#)*

We encourage everyone to get their hearing checked. It's a great way to learn more about your hearing health. It's also an opportunity to pick up any issues with your hearing and ensure you receive the treatment or support you need.

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## We're here to help.

If you'd like more advice on how to protect your hearing or if you have a hearing loss and are seeking support, please get in touch.

**Contact our helpline via phone:**  
**09 307 2922 or 0800 867 446**  
**Or email: [enquiries@nfd.org.nz](mailto:enquiries@nfd.org.nz)**  
**Visit our website: [nfd.org.nz](http://nfd.org.nz)**



# Let's make listening **SAFE**

**20%** Globally,  
1 in 5 teenagers  
have a hearing loss

Since the  
1990s, the rate of  
youth hearing loss has  
increased globally by **30%**

**24%** of students  
recently screened  
received an  
abnormal result

WHO predicts the  
rate of hearing loss  
will **double** over the  
next three decades **100%**

*\*Source: World Health Organization, NFDHH Hearing Screening Programme 2021.*

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