

Listen up! October is National Protect Your Hearing month.

Everyday sounds typically do not damage your hearing. However, many people participate in activities that produce harmful sound levels, such as attending loud sporting events and music concerts, and using power tools, which repeated over time will cause hearing loss.

Loud sound can damage sensitive parts of the ear, causing hearing loss, ringing or buzzing in the ear, and increased sensitivity to sound. Repeated exposure to loud noise over the years affects how well you hear later in life and how quickly you develop hearing problems, even after exposure has stopped.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) say if you have any of these signs or symptoms, you may have hearing loss caused by noise. Speech and other sounds seem muffled. Difficulty hearing high-pitched sounds (e.g., birds, doorbell, telephone, alarm clock). Difficulty understanding conversations when you are in a noisy place, such as a restaurant. Difficulty understanding speech over the phone. Trouble distinguishing speech consonants (e.g., difficulty distinguishing the difference between s and f, between p and t, or between sh and th in speech).

Other signs are asking others to speak more slowly and clearly. Asking someone to speak more loudly or repeat what they said. Turning up the volume of the television or radio. Ringing in the ears. And, hypersensitivity to certain sounds (certain sounds are very bothersome or create pain).

If you have any signs of hearing loss, get tested by a qualified healthcare provider.