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How Loud is Too Loud?

January 4, 2011 - We've all been told "wear ear protection if you are in a noisy environment or setting that is *too loud*" and "don't turn the volume up *too loud*." But, *how loud is too loud?*

Approximately 36 million Americans have hearing loss. One in three developed their hearing loss as a result of exposure to noise.

Sound is measured in units called decibels (dB). A whisper is 30 dB and a normal conversation is 60 dB. An increase of 10 dB means that a sound is 10 times more intense. To your ears, it sounds twice as loud. The sound of an ambulance siren at 120 decibels is about 1 trillion times more intense than the weakest sound our ears can hear.

So what's the magic number? **85 dB** - continued exposure to anything more than 85 dB of noise may cause gradual, but permanent, damage to hearing.

- Play this interactive game to determine [How Loud is Too Loud](#) and what sounds exceed the 85 dB threshold?

Noise Induced Hearing Loss is related to the decibel level and to the amount of time you are exposed to it. In addition, the impact of noise adds up over a lifetime. If you are exposed to loud sounds on a regular basis, your risk for permanent damage increases as you age.

- How long is too long - [Exposure Chart](#)

How can you tell if you're listening to dangerous noise levels?

- You have to raise your voice to be heard.
- You can't hear someone 3-feet away from you.
- Speech around you sounds muffled or dull after you leave the noisy area.

If you suspect a hearing loss, have your hearing tested by an audiologist. To schedule an appointment, e-mail hearing@columbusspeech.org or call 614.261.5452.

Columbus Speech & Hearing Center, founded in 1923, is a non-profit United Way organization serving over 10,000 people annually. Services include hearing evaluations, hearing aids, speech therapy for children and adults, occupational therapy and treatment, and vocational services for the Hard-of-Hearing, Deaf and Deaf-Blind through the Comprehensive Program for the Deaf and Ohio Deaf-Blind

Outreach Program. Generous charitable giving from the community helps offset the cost of the Center's valued services. For more information, www.columbusspeech.org.