

Hearing Protection

Hearing Loss

Noise is everywhere and all the time. Some noise can be engineered out, but some requires the use of hearing protection.

Permanent hearing loss is due to long term exposure to elevated levels of noise. Symptoms of hearing loss can stay hidden for a long time and typically measurable hearing loss is not recognized for several years.

In general, the higher the noise level, the less time it takes to cause damage to the ears.

Types of Hearing Protection

Ear Plugs

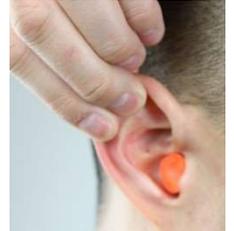


Pros: Disposable, light weight, wide-variety

Cons: Must have clean hands to put in, harder to ensure proper fit, can be uncomfortable.

How to wear properly:

1. Roll the ear plug with clean hands into a narrow tube
2. Reach over your head with your free hand and pull your ear up to open up the ear canal.
3. Insert the earplug with a slight turning motion. The entire length of the plug should fit inside the ear with only a small amount protruding. Hold the earplug in place for 30 seconds to let the foam expand.



Ear Muffs

Pros: Easy on/off, longer lasting and reusable

Cons: Can be uncomfortable on the head, harder to properly seal with additional PPE, larger to be carrying from workplace to workplace

How to wear properly:

1. If you have long hair, push it away from your ears
2. Place ear muffs firmly on your head
3. Adjust the size if necessary



Common Reasons for Not Wearing Hearing Protection

Concern: I cannot hear fellow employees or equipment

- a. Hearing protection is designed to let noise through. It is hard to hear other employees due to all the other noise in the area.
- b. Another option, if it is safe to do so, is reduce the NRR of your hearing protection. This will reduce the noise to a safe level, but not as much that voices cannot be heard.

Concern: I already lost some my hearing so what is the point?

- a. You will continue to lose hearing until you have nothing left. There are also other physical issues that can arise such as a loss of balance and tinnitus.

Concern: It is too uncomfortable to wear for an extended period of time

- a. There are many styles and types of hearing protection that if one style is too uncomfortable, there will be a type that better suits your needs. Your body will also adjust to the feeling of hearing protection with time, making it more comfortable.

Concern: Can't I just wear my earbuds or noise canceling headphones?

- a. No. Earbuds are not noise reducing and actually add noise and damage to the ear. Noise canceling headphones do not work well with inconsistent noise and also then add additional noise based on the volume they are set to.

