



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
EXTENSION

MSU DAWG TRACKS

October is *National Protect Your Hearing Month*.

While hearing can deteriorate because of age and occur gradually, that is not always the case. Working in areas with constant noise, or even occasional exposure to extreme sounds, can adversely affect your hearing for life.

The first few times you attended a loud concert, you may have noticed ringing in your ears or felt that it seemed "too quiet" outside afterwards. In reality, the concert caused a temporary threshold shift - a diminished ability to hear for a period following exposure to loud noise. Half an hour later, you probably noticed it was no longer quiet; you regained your full hearing ability. However, with **repeated exposures to noise over 85 decibels** (about as loud as traffic on a busy street), hearing can become permanently damaged. The louder the noise, the sooner damage will occur.

You may protect your hearing on the job, but your ears don't discriminate between a screaming power saw and a screaming concert or that gun shot while hunting. Excessive noise of any kind damages hearing. Today, ear-buds are also a concern and threat to your hearing ability. The "muff"-type headphones leave an airspace between the sensitive inner ear and the speaker, but earbuds fit tightly into the ear canal, sending high-intensity sound directly into the aural chamber. Continuous listening, even at a reasonable volume, can damage delicate inner-ear hair cells, therefore only 2 hours of earbud listening per day is recommended.

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Did You Know?

- Ten percent of the population has a hearing loss affecting the ability to understand what others are saying?
- Normal conversation has a sound pressure level (SPL) of about 60 decibels (dB). A whisper is heard at about 30dB. A jet taking off at close range can hit 140dB.
- Loss of high frequency hearing distorts sound, causing people to have trouble distinguishing between similar sounding words such as "stone" and "bone."

How Can I Protect the Hearing I Have Left?

- Use engineering practices to eliminate or reduce the noise level. Some common & effective strategies are reducing vibration of parts, swapping for a more quiet muffler, or using sound-deadening material on enclosures.
- Use hearing protection when operating loud equipment such as a lawnmower, chainsaw, or leaf blower, even for short durations.
- Remember to wear foam earplugs or appropriate muffs shooting firearms or attending loud events.

Fitting Instructions for Foam Earplugs

- **ROLL & COMPRESS** - With clean hands, hold earplug between thumb and forefinger as shown. Roll and progressively compress the entire tapered end of the earplug to a small wrinkle-free cylinder.
- **INSERT** this compressed, tapered end, then reach hand over head and gently pull ear upward and outward while the earplug expands in your ear canal for about 30 seconds.



Sources:

<http://safetytoolboxtopics.com/Hearing-Conservation/lesson/>
<http://www.moldex.com/non-product/fit-instructions/hearing/foam-earplug.php>