

Protect Your Hearing



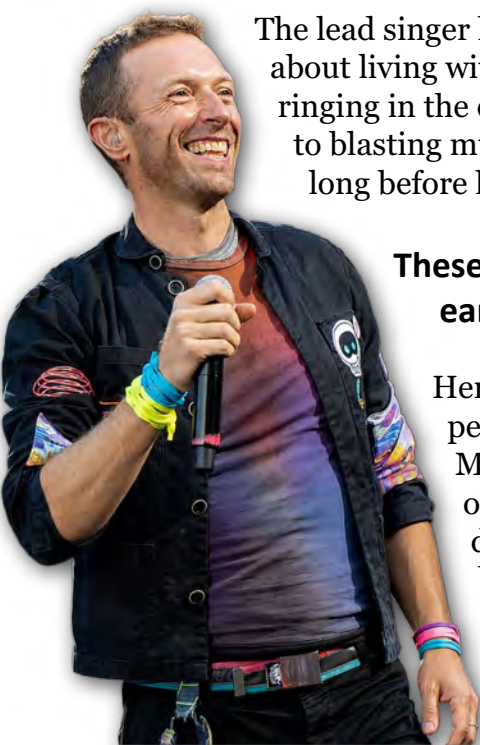
Turn it down to hear it later



Requirements to complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™:

1. Read "Protect Your Hearing."
2. Create a plan to protect your hearing daily.
3. Track your progress in case your organization requires documentation.

Coldplay frontman Chris Martin has sold out stadiums on six continents. He's also spent about two decades listening to a sound nobody else can hear.



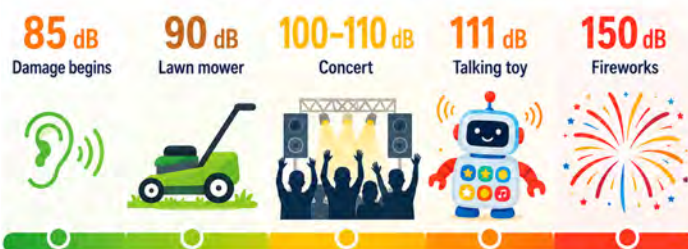
The lead singer has talked openly about living with tinnitus, a constant ringing in the ears. He traces it back to blasting music as a teenager, long before he was famous.

These days he wears earplugs on stage.

Here's the part most people miss. Chris Martin didn't wake up one morning with damaged hearing. It built quietly, year after year, from

How Loud Is Too Loud?

Everyday sounds on the decibel scale



sound he barely noticed at the time. That's how noise works. Every loud concert, mower, leaf blower, and maxed-out earbud session leaves a small mark.

You don't feel it. You don't notice it. Then one day the TV volume creeps up, and restaurants get harder, and you wonder when that happened.

Hearing loss isn't an old-age problem. It's a young-person problem that shows up decades later.

Take the month-long health challenge to **Protect Your Hearing:** Turn it down to hear it later.

HEARING ►



About 1 in 4 adults ages 20 to 69 already have measurable hearing damage, but most don't even know it.

The Damage You Cannot Hear

4 ways hearing loss shows up

You were born with every hair cell you'll ever have. Here's what happens as you spend them.

Your inner ear holds about 16,000 tiny hair cells that turn sound into signals your brain understands. Loud noise flattens them.

Once they're gone, they're gone for good. And the damage reaches a lot further than your ears.



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Sound Check: Can You Hear This?

How much do you know about hearing loss and the day-to-day noises you listen to? Take the quiz to find out.



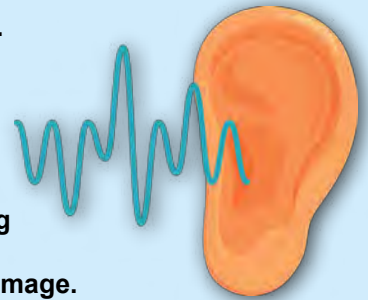
T | F

1. ☐ ☐ Noise-related hearing loss mostly affects people over 65.
2. ☐ ☐ One loud event, like fireworks at close range, can cause permanent hearing loss.
3. ☐ ☐ When the tiny hair cells in your inner ear are damaged, your body grows new ones.
4. ☐ ☐ Earbuds at full volume can be about as loud as standing next to a running motorcycle.
5. ☐ ☐ Hearing loss is linked to a higher risk of dementia.

Check your answers.

How did you do?

About 1 in 4 U.S. adults ages 20 to 69 who say their hearing is good already have measurable noise damage.



Hearing loss can be instant or gradual. Humans can't regrow tiny hair cells in the inner ear once they're gone. Damage is permanent.⁵

✓ **Anything under 70 decibels is safe**, no matter how long you listen.

✗ **At 85 decibels**, damage can start in about eight hours. The louder it gets, the faster it happens.

Listening to earbuds at full volume or standing next to a motorcycle both near 100 decibels.



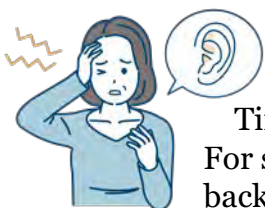
The crazy thing: Some children's toys are even louder. Hearing loss is the single largest changeable midlife risk factor for dementia.³

Answers: 1. False. 2. True. 3. True. 4. False. 5. True

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✖ 1. Simple conversation turns into work

Straining to follow a table full of voices is exhausting. People start avoiding dinners with friends, meetings, and phone calls. Isolation and depression follow.



✖ 2. The ringing in your ears doesn't stop

Tinnitus has no off switch and no cure. For some people it fades into the background. For others it wrecks sleep and concentration.



✖ 3. Your brain works overtime

Researchers now rank hearing loss as the largest changeable risk factor for dementia in midlife.

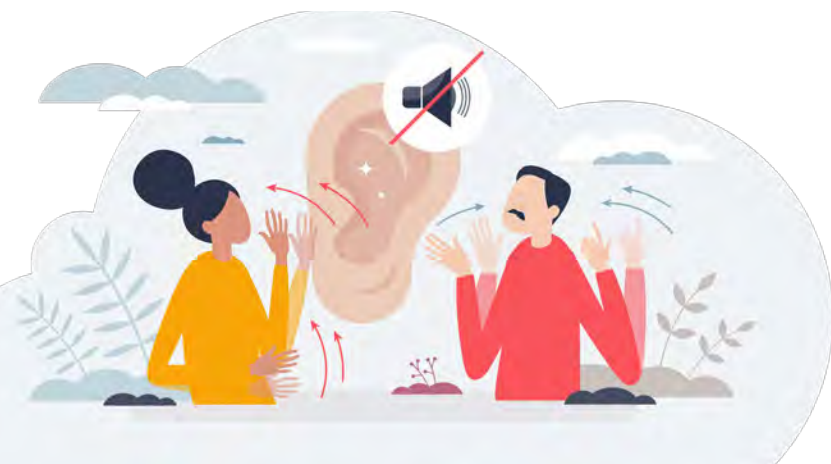
When your brain burns energy decoding muffled sound, it has less left over for everything else.

✖ 4. You miss sounds that keep you safe

Smoke alarms. A car's backup beeper. A kid calling from the next room.



High-pitched sounds go first, and those are the ones built to get your attention.



Hearing loss can begin with sounds that reach 85 decibels. Damage can start in about eight hours. The louder it gets, the faster it happens.

Hearing Loss: This Isn't a Someday Problem

The World Health Organization estimates more than one billion young people worldwide are on track for preventable hearing loss right now.¹

✔ **Here's the good news.** Hearing damage is almost entirely preventable, and even after it starts, it responds to treatment.



- In a major three-year study of older adults at higher risk, treating hearing loss slowed cognitive decline by roughly half.⁴

Hearing loss is preventable. In some cases, it's treatable. If you want to protect your hearing, now is always the best time to start.

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Turn It Down to Hear It Later

8 Easy ways to protect your hearing



You can't get lost inner-ear hair cells back, but you can stop losing more starting today. Pick a few of these to protect your hearing for years to come.

1. Learn the number 85

Sounds at 85 decibels and above start doing damage.²



- **A lawnmower** hits about 90
- **A concert** runs 100 to 110
- **Fireworks** can top 150

The louder it gets, the faster the clock runs. At 100 decibels, you have about 15 minutes before risk begins.



2. Try the 60/60 rule

Keep headphones at 60 percent volume for no more than 60 minutes at a stretch. Then give your ears a break.

3. Use your phone to monitor volume.

Both iPhone and Android track headphone volume and warn you when you cross into

risky territory. Turn the feature on. Most people are shocked by what they see.

4. Buy earplugs you'll actually use

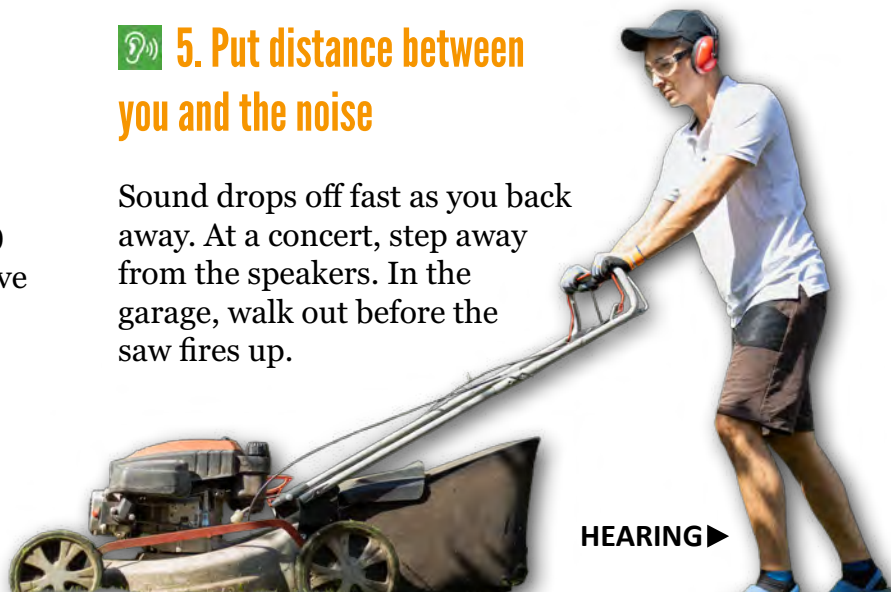
Foam plugs from the drugstore cost almost nothing and work.

Musician-style filtered plugs cost more but keep music sounding clear instead of muddy. If you don't like ear plugs, try sound-canceling headphones.



5. Put distance between you and the noise

Sound drops off fast as you back away. At a concert, step away from the speakers. In the garage, walk out before the saw fires up.



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▼ HEARING

6. Give your ears recovery time

After a loud event, your ears need quiet to recover. Skip the loud drive home. That muffled, underwater feeling after a concert is your ears telling you they took a hit. It fades. The damage underneath doesn't always go with it. If ringing lasts more than a day, call a doctor.



7. Get a baseline test

You can't protect what you haven't measured. Ask your doctor for a hearing screening, or use an at-home test. Knowing your starting point makes any change easy to spot.



8. Watch the toys

For example, one Buzz Lightyear toy from the Toy Story franchise blasts "To infinity and beyond" at 111 decibels. That's louder than a lawn mower.



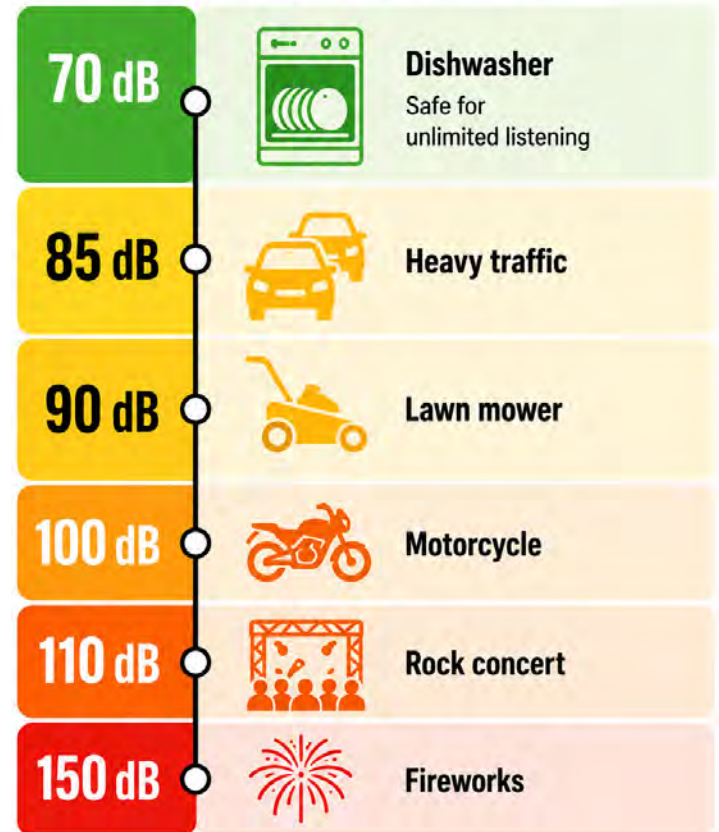
And Disney isn't the only toy maker to break the sound barrier. ⁶ Test the "Try Me" button before you buy it. And if a toy sounds too loud, tape over the speaker.

Here's the good part. None of this asks you to give up the sounds you love. Keep the concerts. Mow your lawn. Listen to music. Just be the person who slips in the earplugs first.

Chris Martin still fills stadiums. He just does it while protecting his hearing. And he wishes he'd started at 16. You get to start today. Turn it down a

HOW LOUD IS TOO LOUD?

Sound levels and safe listening guide



LIMIT YOUR EXPOSURE

The louder the sound, the less time is safe. Use hearing protection when needed.



Protect Your Hearing: Learn More

Measure your own noise:

Download the free Sound Level Meter app
<https://tinyurl.com/3vahffe2>

5 simple ways to prevent hearing loss

<https://tinyurl.com/hhp85ap9>



little now, and you'll still be hearing the good stuff decades from now.

References

1. World Health Organization. (2026). Deafness and hearing loss. From: <https://tinyurl.com/4k7424d3>
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2026). Noise and hearing loss prevention. From: <https://tinyurl.com/hhp85ap9>
3. Livingston, G., et al. (2024). Dementia prevention, intervention, and care: 2024 report of the Lancet standing Commission. *The Lancet*, 404(10452): 572-628. From: <https://tinyurl.com/4kp24cp7>
4. Lin, F.R., et al. (2023). Hearing intervention versus health education control to reduce cognitive decline in older adults with hearing loss in the USA (ACHIEVE): A multicentre, randomised controlled trial. *The Lancet*, 402(10404): 786-797. From: <https://tinyurl.com/7n7477db>
5. National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders. (2025). Noise-Induced Hearing Loss. From: <https://tinyurl.com/2tkjy7vd>
6. Jacksonville Hearing & Balance Institute. (2021). Sight & Hearing Association's Noisy Toys List 2021. From: <https://tinyurl.com/v2etw4tp>

Protect Your Hearing

Turn it down to hear it later

Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, or add to your digital calendar).
2. Protect your hearing daily.
3. Use the calendar to record your actions and choices to protect your hearing.
4. Review your progress at the end of each day, week, and at the end of the month. Then keep up the practice for a lifetime of best health.



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	NOTES
HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	
ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	
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HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	
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HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	
ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	

_____ Number of days this month I protected my hearing.

_____ Number of days this month I exercised 30 minutes.

Other wellness projects completed this month:

NAME _____ **DATE** _____