

# Health Awareness

## Avoid The High Cost Of Hearing Loss

(NAPSA)—Hearing loss is one of the leading public health concerns, impacting an estimated 17 percent of American adults. Despite this fact, most insurance policies cover only a portion of hearing impairment costs, and government-sponsored health programs like Medicare offer little to no coverage at all.

A recent industry survey cited by the National Institutes of Health revealed that, on average, Americans pay \$1,182–\$2,786 per hearing aid—70 percent of those with hearing loss require two devices. As hearing aids must be replaced every four to six years, a person may spend tens of thousands of dollars within his or her lifetime. This factor is one reason fewer than 20 percent of adults with hearing impairment seek help for their condition.

### Hearing Loss from Noise Is Preventable

Many cases of hearing loss are due to excessive noise. With power tools, motorcycles, movies, lawn mowers and music players capable of producing noise levels above 85 decibels (dB), there is no shortage of sounds that put hearing at risk. Prolonged exposure to noises louder than 85 dB can damage your hearing permanently.

“Too many people are losing their hearing because of noise exposure,” says Dr. Laurie Wells, an audiologist in 3M’s hearing protection business. “Noise-induced hearing loss is irreversible and costly—and not just to your pocketbook, but more importantly, to your overall well-being. Hearing loss negatively affects the most fundamental need we have as humans: the ability to communicate with each other. Evidence suggests that people who suffer from hearing loss are less social and more apt to report depression and anxiety.”



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### Protection Is Key

The good news is that noise-induced hearing loss is 100 percent preventable. People can significantly reduce their noise exposure by wearing hearing protection, avoiding repeated exposure to loud noises, and participating in hearing loss prevention programs at work.

To address this growing concern, 3M recently launched the Hearing Pledge. The Hearing Pledge is an awareness campaign aimed at providing education on the risks associated with exposure to excessive noise and encourages visitors to commit to using proper hearing protection, both at work and at home. The site provides educational materials and resources for individuals and businesses interested in implementing hearing protection initiatives. Individuals who commit to protecting their hearing through the Hearing Pledge are entered into a drawing for the chance to win an iPod, along with specially designed headphones with audio-limiting technology. This is just one more incentive to protect your hearing and avoid the costs associated with hearing loss.

To learn more, visit [www.hearingpledge.com](http://www.hearingpledge.com).