

Health Awareness

Tips To Prevent Hearing Loss

(NAPSA)—The level of noise in some environments may surprise you. For example, some people may think that farms are quiet places, but plows, combines, tractors and even farm animals can create a noisy, high-decibel environment that puts hearing at risk. Prolonged exposure to any noise at or above 85 decibels can cause gradual hearing loss and many types of farm equipment run at 100 decibels or higher.

Families that live and work around a farm now have a new way to learn healthy hearing habits to help protect their hearing.

To increase awareness about the causes and prevention of noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL), the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD), part of the National Institutes of Health, has launched a new campaign called *“It’s a Noisy Planet. Protect Their Hearing.”* The campaign focuses its prevention message on tweens (children ages 8–12) and their parents. In addition, the Noisy Planet campaign is partnering with 4-H to help spread the message through extension agents and volunteers.

“The good news is that there are simple steps that everyone can take to protect their hearing from potentially damaging sounds,” says James F. Battey, Jr., M.D., Ph.D., director of the NIDCD.

Here are a few steps:

- Get comfortable hearing protectors and get comfortable using them. Hearing protectors don’t block all sound but they do reduce harmful levels of sound while still allowing a person to hear warning signals.

- Point out ways to practice hearing safety. Remind your child to do chores or other activities away from noisy equipment.

- Move away from the noise. If possible, lower the volume.



The best advice for avoiding hearing loss in rural areas is to “keep it down on the farm” by quieting noisy machinery, moving away from it or wearing ear-plugs. This is especially important for kids when they are doing outdoor chores.

- Be aware of noise levels that put hearing at risk. If you run a piece of farm equipment and have to shout to be heard over the noise, then you should be wearing hearing protection.

- Take steps to reduce noise from machinery. Keep machinery running smoothly by replacing worn parts. Be sure engines are well lubricated and properly tuned to reduce noise from friction or vibrations.

The Noisy Planet website provides parents with information and tips on how to teach children about hearing protection. The site also features articles, games, posters and other materials developed just for kids to make learning about hearing protection fun.

For more information, visit www.noisyplanet.nidcd.nih.gov or call (800) 241-1044 or (800) 241-1055 (TTY).