

IS YOUR PATIENT AT RISK OF HEARING LOSS?

The World Health Organisation have highlighted the serious threat posed by exposure to recreational noise with some 1.1 billion teenagers and young adults at risk of hearing loss (Krug et al., 2015). Noise-induced hearing loss is preventable. The personal fitting of custom-made ear plugs ensures the best level of hearing protection.

Custom-Fit Ear Plugs

Custom-fit ear plugs are used to protect hearing from damage caused by excessive noise. They are more effective than temporary ear plugs and are typically more comfortable to wear than ear muffs.

To make custom-fit ear plugs, an impression of the ear is made from a soft material moulded to a personalised ear plug, ensuring a good fit. An appointment with an audiologist is required for the impression to be taken. It takes approximately 10 days for the ear plugs to be manufactured and delivered back to the clinic.

Types of Ear Plugs

Different types of ear plugs offer different levels of hearing protection. Below are some of the options available.

1. Solid ear plugs:

- Reduce noise overall (including conversations) e.g. factory workers and people who work independently in loud workshop environments.
- These ear plugs can also be used to eliminate other noises like snoring.

2. Solid ear plugs with a filter:

- Suitable for situations where a person is exposed to sudden loud noises but does not need to hear other environmental sounds or people speaking clearly.
- Typical users include motorbike riders.

3. Musician plugs with a filter:

- These are used when a person wants to reduce the noise level but retain the fidelity of sound.
- This type of earplug is not as effective at reducing the level of suddenly loud, high pitch noises.
- Filters can be swapped out to provide different levels of noise reduction, depending on the type of music or noises encountered.
- Typical users include those playing or listening to live music, or noisy work situations where people also need to hear others speaking.

4. Ear plugs with digital electronic hearing protection:

- Suitable for frequent exposure to sudden loud noises when environmental sounds and speech also need to be heard.
- The devices amplify environmental sounds through the earplugs, but automatically switch off when a dangerously loud sound occurs.
- Typical users include recreational hunters and duck shooters.

Non-custom ear plugs are also available. These are typically at a lower price point, and while not as effective as what custom plugs are, this is a better option than not taking any steps to protect hearing.

References

Etienne Krug., Maria Alarcos Cieza., Shelly Chadha., Laura Sminkey., Thais Morata., DeWet Swanepoel., Adrian Fuente., Warwick Williams., Joseph Cerquone., Ricardo Martinez., Gretchen Stevens., Margie Peden., Sowmya Rao., Paras Agarwal., Eighmey Zeeck., Anna Bladey., Malachi Arunda., & Aileen Ncube. (2015). Hearing loss due to recreational exposure to loud sounds: A review. World Health Organisation. Retrieved from https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/154589/9789241508513_eng.pdf;jsessionid=6754B72407301CD565691D0290558D45?sequence=1