



5 Ways to Help Kids Protect Their Hearing When Using Earbuds and Headphones

More than **1.1 billion young people worldwide** are at risk of noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL), according to the World Health Organization. One of the main culprits is listening to personal technology devices at too-loud volumes, and for too long.

With many kids now engaged in five or more hours of virtual learning daily, often while wearing earbuds or headphones, protecting their hearing is more important than ever.

Good listening habits start early! Parents can help kids prevent NIHL. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) offers this advice to families:

- **Encourage listening breaks.** If kids are engaged in virtual learning, strive for breaks between classes, if possible. Even a few minutes of rest for their ears can make a big difference. When using earbuds and headphones for recreational purposes, take a break every hour.
- **Teach kids to be volume aware.** If you're constantly asking your child to "turn it down," try being more specific: A good rule of thumb is to keep the volume at half level. Kids should also learn to stay vigilant about noise. They may need to adjust their volume throughout the day, depending on what they're doing.
- **Help kids appreciate their hearing.** Have a conversation about why it's important that kids listen safely. Do they want to continue enjoying their music, shows, and conversation with friends for years to come? By taking some simple steps, they can.
- **Use parental controls.** Beyond volume-limiting headphones (which aren't foolproof), many tablets and other devices have built-in controls that allow parents to control the maximum volume. Various apps also serve that purpose.
- **Learn the signs of hearing loss.** The signs of hearing damage can be subtle, especially since NIHL is often cumulative—occurring in small increments over time. Signs to watch for include difficulty hearing soft or faint sounds, ringing in the ears, or ear discomfort.

If you have concerns about your child's hearing, contact a certified audiologist for a hearing evaluation. Find one, and learn more, at **www.asha.org/public**.



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