

Hearing Protection

Hearing is an important part of our everyday life. While the ear is a complex system capable of hearing a variety of frequencies, it is sensitive and can be easily damaged. Hearing can be permanently damaged in an instant or take years with a gradual reduction in hearing over time with continual noise exposure.

What's the Danger?

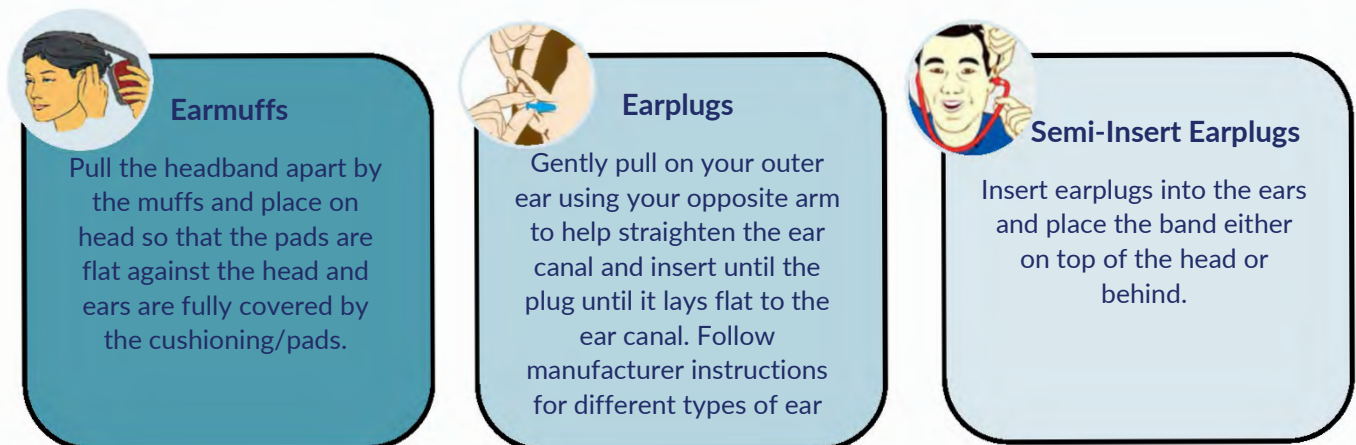
Noise is a common workplace hazard and can result in permanent and irreversible hearing loss if control measures are not implemented. Noise assessments must be conducted to determine risks and effective control measures.

You can play a role in the success of these programs by following some basic rules regarding the care and use of your hearing protection. When employers are unable to bring noise levels below acceptable levels through other effective control measures (i.e., equipment repair, isolating equipment, elimination), workers will be required to wear hearing protection when exposed to noise levels equivalent to or greater than **85 dBA**.

Noise exposure assessments are required to be conducted by the employer if it is expected that a worker is exposed to noise levels higher than **80 dBA**. Noise exposure assessment should also be conducted where there are alterations, renovations, or repairs in the workplace, new equipment is introduced, modifications to work processes that alter noise exposure, or if an employee provides evidence of occupational hearing loss.

There are three types of hearing protection most frequently used to prevent resulting hearing damage:

- **Earmuffs** – Consist of sound-reducing materials, soft ear cushions, and hard outer caps, that are held together by a headband.
- **Earplugs** – Two pieces of portable foam, silicon, wax, or cast plastic. Foam pieces can be pre-molded, moldable, rolldown foam, push-to-fit, or custom-molded. Some earplugs require rolling prior to inserting.
- **Semi-Insert Earplugs** - Two earplugs held together by a hard-plastic headband to hold them in the ear canal.



Care of hearing protection is important to ensure the personal protective equipment is always providing the highest level of protection. Follow user instructions provided with the hearing protectors for proper fitting, cleaning, storage, and replacement. Earplugs need to be replaced once they are no longer effectively expanding into your ears. Earmuffs and other hearing protection are to be inspected for damage and cleaned regularly.

When hearing protection is damaged or no longer provides an effective noise-blocking seal, report to your supervisor for replacement. Inspect hearing protection for dirt, deformation, damage, or hardening before use. Avoid treating hearing protection with any other substances other than water and store it in their own clean case when not in use.



Safety Tips

- ✓ Warning signs should be posted to warn of any noise hazards and areas requiring hearing protection.
- ✓ Hearing protection is to be supplied to workers, contractors, and visitors.
- ✓ Store reusable hearing protection in a clean, dry place.
- ✓ Replace hearing protection if cracked, discoloured, loss of flexibility, or if there is a change in texture.
- ✓ When wearing earmuffs, ensure eye protection and facial hair do not render the earmuffs ineffective as it can create a poor seal surrounding the ear.
- ✓ Use dual protection, both earplugs and earmuffs in environments with high noises, where one source of hearing protection is not rated high enough to be effective.
- ✓ Dispose of foam earplugs when they lose the ability to contract and expand into the ear canal.
- ✓ Noise-cancelling headphones are not the same as sound reduction and most earbuds and headphones are not tested and certified as hearing protection. Music may also cause distractions, leading to incidents.

Demonstrate

Demonstrate or ask workers for a volunteer to show proper technique for putting in earplugs.

Discuss areas in the facility with high noise levels requiring hearing protection where they can find supplies.

Discussion

What type of noise hazards are you exposed to?

What should you do if you are experiencing hearing loss symptoms?



Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health Act and Regulation

Part 6, Personal Protective Equipment

Part 12, Hearing Conservation and Noise Control

CSA Standard Z94.2-14 Hearing Protection Devices Performance, Selection, Care and Use

CSA Z107.56-13, Measurement of Noise Exposure

Workers Involved in this Safety Talk

Date: _____

Name	Signature

Name	Signature

Notes
