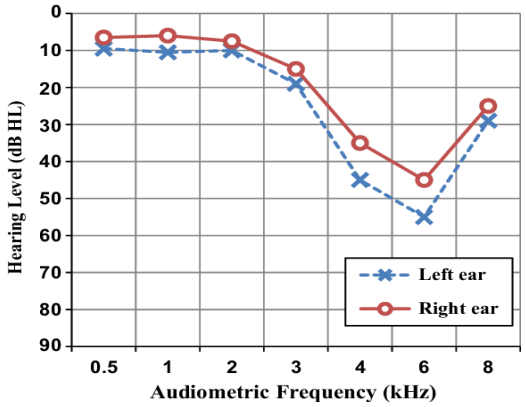
Introduction

Exposure to high levels of noise (above 85dB), for prolonged periods is likely to cause permanent damage to a person's hearing. This might result in hearing loss and/or tinnitus. The louder the noise and the longer the exposure, the greater the risk.

Mid-range hearing frequencies (3 kHz, 4 kHz & 6 kHz) are more likely to be affected by loud noise as these are the frequencies used for communication and are most sensitive. This type of hearing loss is usually referred to as Noise Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL).

A person suffering with NIHL will often have an audiogram that looks something like this:



We can see from the audiogram that the loss in sensitivity to those mid-range frequencies is significantly more pronounced compared to the higher or lower ones.

Once this damage has occurred, it cannot be reversed. The focus will then be on preserving what residual hearing remains.

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How will I know if my hearing loss is *noise induced?*

Our practitioners have been trained to look for audiograms that conform to this shape.

Where identified, a calculation can be performed to confirm that the curve meets the requirements for "Cole's Notch". This criterion is the one most often used to identify NIHL and the criteria usually used in a court of law.

Potential cases of NIHL are passed to an Occupational Health Physician who will review the results and other evidence, decide fitness and inform both the individual and employer of the outcome. In some cases, the physician may wish to review the employee in person before deciding fitness.

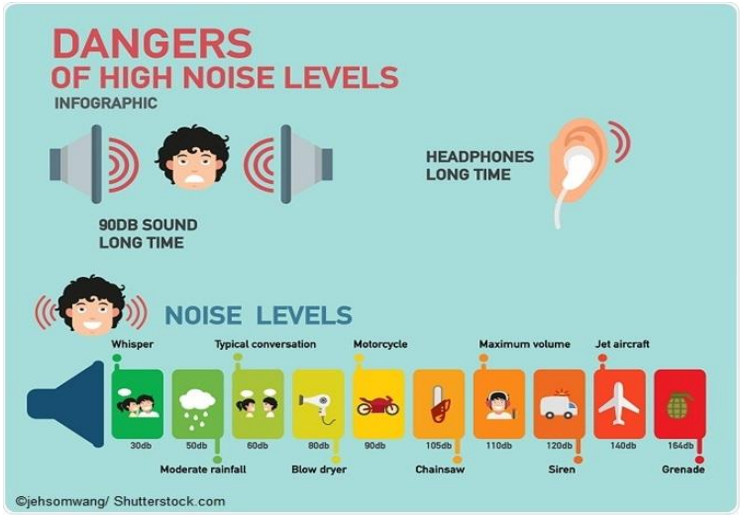
If I receive a diagnosis of NIHL, what should I do?

- Try to conserve what hearing you have left.
- Comply with local rules concerning the wearing of hearing protection.
- Continue to participate in hearing test programmes to ensure that your hearing is not getting worse.
- Ensure that your hearing protection is appropriate to your needs and exposure, and not causing dangerous situations by over attenuation.
- Talk to your GP about a hearing aid if you are having trouble communicating.

Is NIHL due to my current job?

Not necessarily. Any sources of excessive noise can contribute towards hearing loss, including:

- Exposure to noise in previous jobs.
- Poor compliance with PPE in noisy environments.
- Shooting.
- Motorcycling.
- Listening to loud music (including on your phone).
- Noisy motorsports.



Further information may be found at:
https://rnid.org.uk/information-and-support/hearing-loss/types-of-hearing-loss-and-deafness/noise-induced-hearing-loss/

A copy of this information leaflet can be downloaded from:
https://mohs.co.uk/resources/

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Noise Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL) - A Guide for Workers

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