

Ear Plugs For All Seasons

Summer is here, and along with it, the perfect time for a swim. Ear plugs can keep your ears dry during swimming, and ward off swimmer's ear.

Summer isn't the only time to think about protecting your ears, however. Some fall, winter and spring activities with loud noise levels also warrant proper ear protection.

Swimmer's Ear

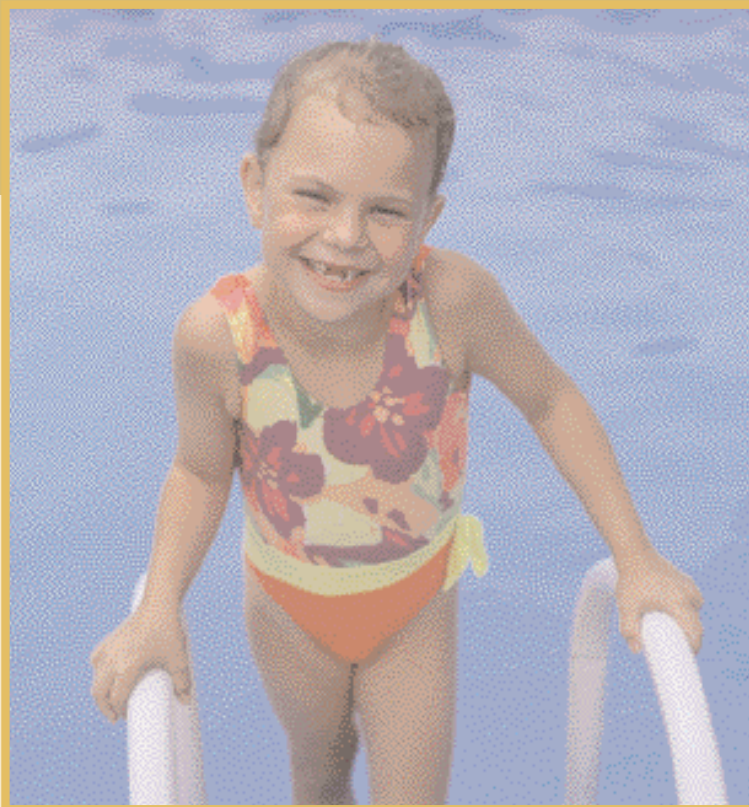
Swimmer's ear is an external, non-contagious ear canal infection.¹ Water trapped in the ears can irritate the skin or cause infection.^{2,3} Doctors generally prescribe antibiotic treatments, and also have patients keep their infected ears out of water for 10 to 14 days.^{1,3} When bathing, patients should wear ear plugs plus a shower cap, or put cotton balls coated with petroleum jelly in the ears to block out water.¹

Noise-Induced Hearing Loss

Whipping winds and cool, crisp air during the other months of the year may call you outdoors. Whatever the weather, don't forget ear protection when using firearms, leaf blowers, chainsaws, lawn mowers, snow blowers or snowmobiles.

Dangerous Sounds

Repetitive or long-term use of some machines may instantaneously cause permanent



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hearing loss.^{4,5} Here are some examples of dangerous sounds, their decibel levels, and the time it takes exposure to them to cause hearing loss:

- Power lawn mower, 90-100 dB, 1-2 hours
- Chain saw, 110 dB, 2-3 minutes
- Leaf blower, 95-115 dB, 1-5 minutes
- Fireworks, 130-190 dB, 1-10 seconds
- Football stadium, 90-110 dB, 1-2 hours
- Snowmobile, 100dB, 15-30 minutes
- Rock concert, 110-120dB, less than 30 seconds
- Handgun or rifle, 160-170dB, less than 1 second⁶

Ounce of Prevention

Try some of the following items to prevent hearing loss all year long:

- waterproof ear plugs, to help prevent swimmer's ear;
- ear muffs, to protect ears when shooting firearms or in noisy work environments;
- foam ear plugs, to block out light noises like snoring, loud conversations or city traffic;
- a combination of ear plugs and eye safety glasses, available for gun users and laborers in loud environments;⁵ or
- neoprene headbands, to protect ears from water and help ear plugs stay in place.

References

1. KidsHealth®. External Otitis (Swimmer's Ear). Accessed via http://kidshealth.org/parent/infections/bacterial_viral/swimmer_ear.html
2. American Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery. Swimmer's Ear. Accessed via www.aao-hns.org/healthinfo/ears/swimmers.cfm
3. AskDrSears.com. Swimmer's Ear. Accessed via www.askdrsears.com/html/8/T085900.asp
4. National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders. Noise-Induced Hearing Loss. Accessed via www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/hearing/noise.asp
5. National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders. Lessons in Shooter Safety. Accessed via www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/wise/shooter.asp
6. National Campaign for Hearing Health. Accessed via www.hearinghealth.net/pages/hearus/index.html

For More Information

American Academy of Otolaryngology—
Head and Neck Surgery
www.aao-hns.org

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming/swimmers_ear.htm

National Institute on Deafness and Other
Communication Disorders
www.nidcd.nih.gov/index.asp

National Hearing Conservation Association
www.hearingconservation.org