

How do you know if your child has a hearing problem or speech and language difficulties?

If your child does not respond to sounds or shows a lack of awareness to others, he or she may have a hearing problem. Examples of problems communicating include: not trying to talk (by 18 months), using very few words (by two years), not putting two words together (by three years) and difficulty being understood by others (by four years).

If you think that your child is having problems hearing or communicating, contact your family doctor.

For more information:

Toronto Health Connection

416-338-7600
www.toronto.ca/health

Toronto Preschool Speech & Language Services
(central referral and information)
416-338-8255
www.tpsls.on.ca

Canadian Hearing Society

416-964-9595

Health Canada

(for product safety information)
416-973-4705

NoiseWatch

www3.sympatico.ca/noisewatch

This pamphlet has been kindly reviewed by:
Arline L. Bronzaft, Ph.D., League for the Hard of Hearing

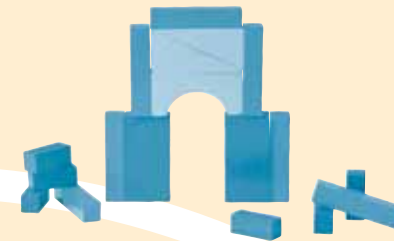
Noise in Your Home

Hearing loss is preventable! Reducing the noise level in your home also helps to provide an environment where clear communication takes place. This fosters your child's development of speech and language skills every day.

A quiet home offers your child a place that fosters learning, promotes health and a chance to enjoy family time.

- Set aside some quiet time with your child and provide quiet places to read, study and reflect.
- Monitor your child's use of toys that emit sound. If it sounds loud, remove the batteries or discard it.
- Turn down the volume on televisions, stereos and computers.
- Teach your child to keep the volume on a personal cassette player low enough so people don't have to shout to be understood.

- Listen to a toy before buying it. Watch for excessive noise from a toy by holding it away from your body then gradually move it closer to your ear. If it sounds loud, don't buy it!
- Encourage friends and family to buy quiet toys (e.g., books, puzzles, construction sets).
- Check the decibel level (dBA) when buying new appliances such as vacuums and dishwashers (some models are made quieter).
- Place noisy small appliances such as blenders on foam pads to reduce noise.



Noise & children

Reducing the level of noise in your home

Noise & Children

Noise surrounds us every day. The sounds of daily living such as traffic, airplanes, construction and garden equipment bombard us. Televisions, computers, appliances and toys can be a continuous source of background noise.

Noise is unwanted sound. Sound levels are measured in decibels (dBA). The higher the decibel level above what is considered safe and the longer the time exposed to the noise, the more likely it will harm your health.

Here are some common sounds and decibel levels:

COMMON SOUNDS	DECIBEL LEVELS
normal conversation	60
driving in the car on highway with the windows up	80
subway train entering station	100
rock concert	110

*Exposure to noise for eight hours a day with an average sound level of 85 dBA can cause permanent hearing loss over time.

Intense and impulsive noise such as a balloon bursting (157 dBA) or a cap gun shooting (135 dBA) close to the ear can cause immediate and permanent hearing loss.

We all react differently to noise. Not only can noise be annoying or irritating, it can also harm our physical and mental health. Too much noise can be especially harmful to our children.

How loud is too loud?

Children are especially at risk to noise because their bodies are still developing. Generally, the risk depends on the noise level at the child's ear and how long the child is exposed to the noise.

For hearing loss

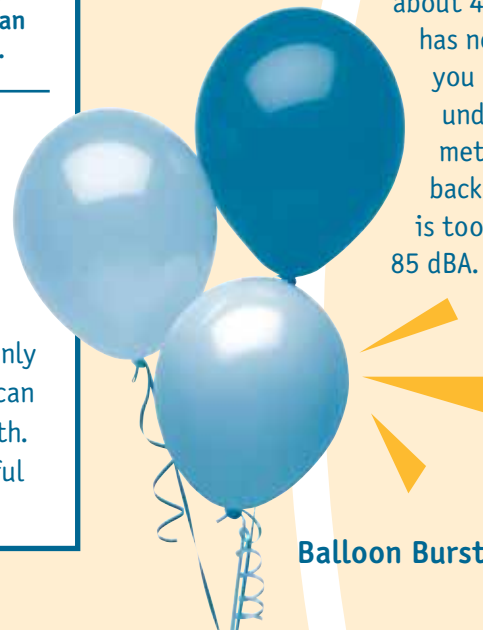
- To know if a sound is loud enough to damage your child's hearing, it is important to know the level of intensity (measured in dBA) and the length of exposure to the sound.
- Being exposed to average sound levels above 85 dBA over a long period of time can cause permanent hearing loss.

For clear communication

Too much noise can affect your child's ability to:

- understand what is spoken to them
- learn to speak
- read and do tasks

For communication to be clear, background levels of noise should be about 45 dBA. If your child has normal hearing and you have to shout to be understood from one meter away, the background noise level is too loud, likely about 85 dBA.

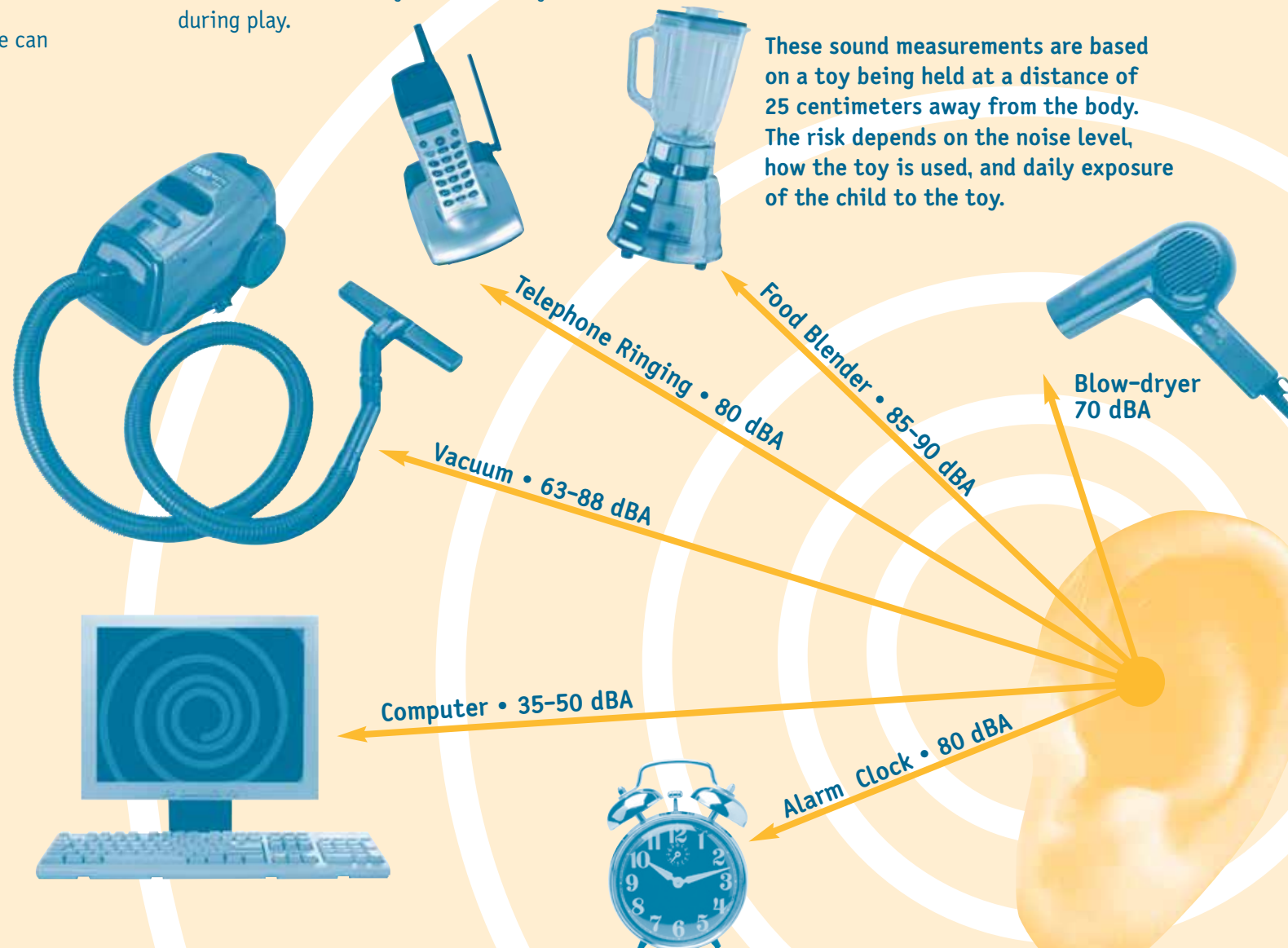


Balloon Bursting • 150 dBA

Toys with Sound

Toys can be loud enough to cause hearing damage in children. Toys that emit a noise over 100 dBA are banned by Health Canada under the Hazardous Products Act. However, toy manufacturers are not required to label toys with the decibel level.

A young child will often bring a toy close to his or her body as part of the learning process. This can increase the risk of harm to a child's small and sensitive ear if the toy was designed to be held further away from the body during play.



Telephone Ringing • 80 dBA

Food Blender • 85-90 dBA

Blow-dryer 70 dBA

Vacuum • 63-88 dBA

Computer • 35-50 dBA

Alarm Clock • 80 dBA

A child's hearing can be damaged by:

- noise from a cap gun (135 dBA) which can instantly and permanently damage a child's hearing especially if held close to the ear.
- toys such as cassette players (97 dBA), toy xylophones (92 dBA), and toy trucks and cars (88 dBA) which can be too noisy especially if held close to a child's ear.
- squeaky toys (65 to 94 dBA) which can harm a child if held too close to the ear.
- personal cassette players turned up so loud that people have to shout to be understood.

These sound measurements are based on a toy being held at a distance of 25 centimeters away from the body. The risk depends on the noise level, how the toy is used, and daily exposure of the child to the toy.