



# Inquiring Ears Want to Know

A fact sheet about your hearing test

This sheet explains your audiogram (hearing test) and gives some basic information about protecting your hearing. Keep it so you can refer to it later.

## What is an audiogram?

- An audiogram is often called a “hearing test,” but there’s no pass or fail
- It is a written record of your hearing levels
- A series of audiograms can track changes in hearing over time
- Your hearing threshold levels (the quietest sounds you can hear) are measured in decibels (dB) at different frequencies from low (500 Hz) to high (8000 Hz)

## Why should I get audiograms?

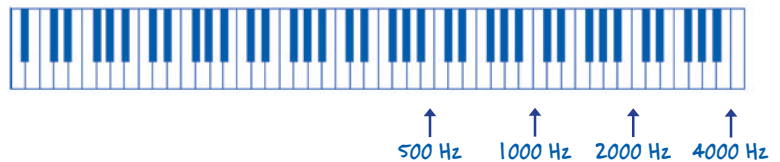
- To measure your hearing ability
- To identify hearing problems
- To monitor success at maintaining your hearing
- To see if noise exposure is affecting your hearing

## Do I have normal hearing?

Compare your hearing threshold levels to this scale:

-10 – 25 dB	Normal hearing
26 – 40 dB	Mild loss
41 – 55 dB	Moderate loss
56 – 70 dB	Moderate/severe loss
71 – 90 dB	Severe loss
91 – 100 dB	Profound loss

Audiograms test a range of sounds from low to high frequency (pitch). The test frequencies, measured in Hertz (Hz) usually range from 500 Hz (around the middle of a piano’s scale) up to 6000 or 8000 Hz (a little above the highest note a piano can play).



## Sample audiogram results

Frequency of test tone in Hz

Left Ear Thresholds							Right Ear Thresholds						
500	1000	2000	3000	4000	6000	8000	500	1000	2000	3000	4000	6000	8000
0	-5	0	10	5	0	5	5	0	10	15	30	40	35

Normal hearing threshold levels (25 dB or less, negative numbers are especially good)

Worse than normal levels (more than 25 dB)

## What can cause my hearing to get worse?

Noise is the greatest hearing hazard for most workers, but any of these factors can cause or contribute to hearing loss:

Hazardous noise	Earwax blockage	Medical diseases
Head trauma	Heredity	Frequent ear infections
Aging	Medications	Chemical exposures

See an audiologist or physician for more information about these causes.

## Noise is everywhere! How do I protect myself?

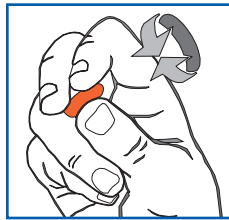
- If you must shout to be heard over the noise, it's probably too loud!
- Noise doesn't only happen at work. Noisy home and recreational activities can be hazardous.
- Have hearing protectors on hand. Use them on and off the job.

## How do I select and use hearing protectors?

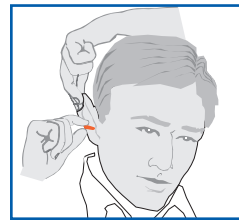
- Comfort — so you'll wear them
- Consistency — use them every time, all the time, in hazardous noise
- Cleanliness — keep plugs and hands as clean as possible

## How do I insert a foam earplug to help protect my hearing?

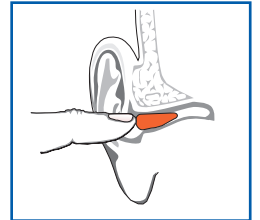
1. **Roll** the earplug
2. **Pull** to open the ear. This step is especially important. You should pull up and away on the top of your ear with the opposite hand so the earplug can slide in easily.
3. **Hold** the earplug after inserting it.



Roll



Pull



Hold

## Your test results are valuable — don't lose them!

- Keep a copy of your audiogram in a safe place.
- Give a copy to your primary care doctor.
- Give a copy to the administrator of your hearing conservation program.

---

To receive NIOSH documents or for more information about occupational safety and health topics, contact:

1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636) • 1-888-232-6348 (TTY)

e-mail: [cdcinfo@cdc.gov](mailto:cdcinfo@cdc.gov)

or visit the NIOSH Web site at [www.cdc.gov/niosh](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh)

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health



**SAFER • HEALTHIER • PEOPLE**

DHHS (NIOSH) Publication Number 2008-102

