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About 48 million Americans experience significant hearing loss.

March 7, 2016 By Kate Ferguson

The reasons why people lose their hearing include congenital conditions caused by certain genes inherited from a parent. Hearing loss may also be acquired later in life, triggered by genetics or damage to the ear from noise, certain illnesses or some other condition. In addition, experts note that sudden deafness, an unexplained, rapid loss of hearing, usually in one ear, sometimes strikes adults in their 40s or 50s.

Of these reasons, however, the one that's easiest to prevent is noise-induced hearing loss. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an estimated 12.5 percent of children and adolescents ages 6 to 19, or about 5.2 million youngsters, and 17 percent of adults ages 20 to 69, or nearly 26 million people, have suffered permanent damage to their hearing from excessive exposure to noise.

This type of hearing loss is usually caused by extremely loud sounds and cannot be medically or surgically corrected. In general, noise-induced hearing loss can result from a single exposure to a very loud sound, blast or impulse, or from listening to loud sounds over an extended period of time.

But a few simple precautions can help you avoid losing your hearing to these treacherous noisemakers, the CDC advises. Cover your ears with protective devices when operating noisy machines, such as lawnmowers, snow-blowers, power tools, and fuel-driven recreational and motor vehicles; put distance between yourself and any sources of loud sounds; and turn down the volume when listening to music, especially tunes piped through devices you insert in your ears.

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