

Fireworks can take toll on hearing in children, adults

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Admiring fireworks from afar sounds like the best plan, according to a Purdue audiologist.

"Distance is your friend," says Shannon Van Hyfte, clinical associate professor of audiology and director of the M.D. Steer Audiology Clinic. "When it comes to fireworks, the volume is so great that it doesn't take a long time of exposure to sustain harm. Less time is needed to cause damage."

A normal conversation is measured at 60 [decibels](#). Occupational Safety and Health Administration safety standards cap the level of [safety](#) at 85 decibels. Fireworks' volume ranges from 120 to 170 decibels, and the threshold of pain is 140 decibels.

"Whether it's a professional or personal fireworks show, you are better off further away. If you can't secure distance, use earmuff headphones or foam ear plugs," Van Hyfte says.

Van Hyfte also suggests parents take note of [young children](#)'s reactions. If they are crying or covering their [ears](#), it could be a sign that the noise is painful. Adults also should take note if they hear a muffled sound or ringing in the ears. If these sensations persist, then they should talk to their doctor.

"Hearing loss due to noise exposure does not hurt and you don't know you are doing damage," she says. "Hearing loss is something most people don't realize until it's too late. It's not reversible, but it is something you can prevent."

Provided by Purdue University

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