

# How Loud Is Too Loud? Plus Mental Health Tips for Noise Awareness Day!

written by CPH Insurance | June 15, 2016

Tomorrow is the 19th International Noise Awareness Day! Noise has wide and often unforeseen (er... heard?) impacts on mental health and well being for allied health professionals, mental health professionals, and the public alike!

Noise, or “unwanted sound,” is an identifiable factor in our environment that can have insidious affects on performance, sleep, stress levels, annoyance, and even cardiovascular disease. However, linking noise directly as a cause of psychological symptoms is not easy. Awareness is key to understanding how noise affects us, both as professionals, and as patients ourselves.

## **What affects can noise have on me and my patients?**

Noise can:

- Interfere with task performance
- Cause annoyance and stress in social situations
- Prolonged exposure to unnatural noise, especially in the workplace, can cause hypertension and has been linked to heart disease
- Aircraft and road traffic noise exposure have been linked to psychiatric disorder
- Chronic aircraft noise exposure in children can impair reading and long-term memory
- Noise can cause high blood pressure and stress
- Hearing damage and loss
- Sleep disturbance leading to mood altering and increased stress

## **Noise and Psychology**

Dealing with noise is not a passive process, but an active one. Coping with the additional stress and making adjustments to a noisy environment, be it a school, workplace, or social setting indicate increases in mood, anxiety, stress, headaches, argumentativeness and more.

Ultimately, since even low noise levels cause stress hormones to release in the body, our mental health and well-being are damaged by any interfering noise.

## **Noise and Physiology**

Noise can cause hearing damage! An obvious threat, but not one to take lightly. Try out this test from “Hear the World” and discover just how often you are exposed to places that are literally too loud! It’s

all based on everyday sounds, so find out what you can stand and what is too dangerous for you to be exposed to! In some cases, just 1-3 minutes of exposure can cause hearing damage. Protect yourself with this knowledge and [try it out!](#)

## **Occupational Hazards**

One major source of noise in the health care field is obvious for mental health! The MRI machine causes incredibly loud banging when reading the brain and body. The banging, as loud as 125 decibels (the 1-minute to hearing damage range) is caused by rapid electrical pulses shooting through vibrating metal coils. Passing out the earplugs is a must, but remember, some people have more sensitive hearing than others, so always be aware of the patient's needs!

## **Related Conditions**

Some major conditions related to noise and mental health include:

According to the NIH, Tinnitus, or ringing in the ears, often caused by hearing damage and other related medical issues. This "internal" noise can manifest itself as a roar, click, hiss or buzz, and is often caused by overexposure to noise!

**Hyperacusis** is an over-sensitivity to some sounds or frequencies. These can also be caused by hearing damage! The auditory nerve is affected by loud sounds, that can easily lead to trauma and a greater sensitivity to noise.

Noise can have serious consequences on every day life. Take it into account this Noise Awareness Day!