

# Module 4.

## Protecting Our Hearing

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### Why...

Students will be more likely to look after their hearing health if they know the different ways to do so. The more comfortable they feel that they are capable of reducing their noise exposure and carrying out related behaviours, the more likely they are to engage in making healthy hearing decisions.

### What...

**Module Aim:** To educate students how to best protect their hearing in different environments

**Students will be able to:**

- Understand the different methods for reducing their noise exposure in risky situations
- Choose which methods may be most appropriate in different contexts

**Lesson Components:**

- Noise reduction strategies
- Choosing the right strategy
  
- Promoting Healthy Hearing (optional)
- Using earplugs (optional)

**Preparation**

Where possible have some examples of hearing protection available for students to see and handle.

If teaching students how to insert earplugs, have a set for each child (with spares), and ensure all children have clean hands before commencing.

Some teachers may prefer to invite an audiologist or other hearing specialist into the classroom to teach about use of earplugs, and hearing health issues.

## How...

### 1. Noise Reduction Strategies

#### **Description:**

Students discuss ways they can look after their hearing health, and environments where they may need to take steps to reduce their noise exposure.

#### **Procedure:**

Discuss/brainstorm the different strategies available to prevent noise injury. Ask children to brainstorm all the strategies they can think of that will help protect their hearing from noise injury. It may be helpful to write students suggestions on the board and discuss with the students any strategies that are ineffective and why – and mark less than ideal strategies (e.g., with a “?” or a “X”).

As students suggest ideas, make sure the key three are included in the final list:

- Moving away from noise
- Turning down noise at the source
- Using barriers/hearing protection

Recap on the preventive strategies. Ask students why it might be useful to have a range of different strategies.

## 2. Choosing a Safe Strategy

### Description:

There is not one “right” strategy for reducing noise exposure. This activity aims to assist students understand the differences between hearing protection methods, and choosing the most appropriate strategy for the situation.

### Resource:

Worksheet - Choosing a safe strategy

### Procedure:

In small groups, or as a class, get students to recall noisy situations they have been exposed to in the past, or may be exposed to in the near future and list these (5-10 is likely to be plenty).

Once the list is complete, remind students of the different hearing protection strategies and ask students to discuss each situation/activity and decide which strategy may be best in each. It may be helpful to have students transcribe their list onto the attached template and complete the table.

e.g.

<b>Noisy Activity.</b> <b>From your list, write down 5-7 noisy activities you may be exposed to.</b>	<b>Can you move away?</b>	<b>Can you turn it down?</b>	<b>Can you wear earplugs/hearing protection?</b>	<b>What strategy is best?</b>
<i>E.g. Someone is mowing the grass at the local park near where you are playing</i>	<i>Yes, you could move to another area of the park</i>	<i>No – you can't turn a mower down!</i>	<i>Maybe - but you don't usually have earplugs with you at the park!</i>	<i>Moving away is going to be the best option in this situation</i>

Remind students that sometimes different strategies may be possible. E.g. “wearing hearing protection” will nearly always protect hearing – but it may not be the best option in environments when you are exposed to unexpected noise and don't have hearing protection with you!

## Optional Extension Activities

### A. Spread the Word!

#### **Description:**

Students are more likely to engage in health behaviours they feel a part of. Ask students to be involved in educating others about healthy hearing.

#### **Suggestions:**

- Ask students to design a poster about how we can protect our hearing.
- As a class – design a healthy hearing campaign for the school/local area
- For older students, involve students in teaching younger grades/classes about hearing.

## **B. Using Earplugs**

### **Description:**

Students' motivation to wear earplugs will be improved if they feel comfortable and confident about how to access and use them.

### **Procedure:**

Inexpensive foam earplugs can be purchased from most Chemists or hardware stores, and usually include instructions for use. If available, you can also show students other available types of earplugs.

If possible, invite an audiologist or other hearing health expert to assist in running the lesson. NB: Basic hygiene precautions should be taken prior to the lesson. Ensure children have clean hands and that they only trial the activity with clean ear plugs (do not allow them to swap earplugs with each other or between ears). If any students have discharge from their ears or heavy wax build up they should not be involved in the activity.

You may wish to demonstrate the correct procedure and send children home with earplugs to try under parental supervision.

Explain to students that earplugs can be used to protect their hearing, but they need to be worn correctly. Show students how the foam earplugs should be rolled to a thin cylinder, then inserted into the ear canal (while pulling up and out on the pinna). Earplugs should be held in place for approx 10 seconds while the foam expands to fit the ear canal. Some earplugs will also include indicators to show if they are not inserted correctly.