

Noise from fireworks threatens young ears

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Expert advises families to sit at least 500 feet from launch area.

(HealthDay)—The Fourth of July weekend is a time for celebrations and beautiful fireworks displays. But, parents do need to take steps to protect their children's ears from loud fireworks, a hearing expert cautions.

"Fireworks can be harmful to a child's ears," Dr. Laura Swibel Rosenthal, a pediatric ear, nose and throat doctor at Loyola University Health System in Chicago, said in a health system news release.

"It is rare, but I have seen problems such as hearing loss and a [tympanic membrane](#) perforation," she explained. A tympanic membrane rupture is commonly known as a ruptured eardrum.

Rosenthal said that World Health Organization guidelines advise that children not be exposed to sounds that exceed 140 decibels (dB). Fireworks, however, can range from as low as 130 dB to as high as 190 dB. For comparison, the sound of a jet taking off from a distance of about 300 feet is 125 dB, the U.S. Department of Labor says.

Rosenthal added that although many noise-related injuries are temporary, some are permanent. There are no treatment options to restore hearing loss resulting from exposure to excessively [loud noise](#).

"The feeling of aural fullness and mild [hearing loss](#) that most of us have experienced immediately after recreational noise exposure is usually temporary," she said. "But exposure to [loud sounds](#) over time can have a cumulative and permanent effect on hearing, so protect your kids' ears now to keep them hearing in the future."

One simple way is to sit further away from the fireworks, she suggested.

"The farther away you are, the less impact the fireworks will have on a child's hearing," Rosenthal explained. "Sit at least 500 feet away from where the fireworks are launched. Also, consider purchasing noise-reduction earplugs or headphones, which can help protect a child's hearing."

More information: For more on hearing loss, visit the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

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