

## Listen hear! Protect your hearing

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17 February 2023

CS Health is working with industry to raise awareness of hearing loss and the impact it can have. Coinciding with World Hearing Day that takes place in early March, the campaign is designed to improve hearing protection practices and prevent noise-induced hearing loss.

Hearing loss is common with about one in six Australians affected. Noise-induced hearing loss is caused by long-term exposure to excessive noise at work and is a major cause of preventable hearing loss.

Dr David Meredith, Head of Medicine at CS Health, said that even though noise-induced hearing loss, or industrial deafness, is entirely preventable we still see it as an ongoing issue.

“Industrial deafness is a concern for anyone working in a noisy environment. In the mining industry, for example, workers are exposed to loud machinery for extended periods of time which puts them at risk of developing hearing loss,” he said. “Although industrial deafness is 100% preventable, there has been an increase in workers compensation claims and associated costs in recent years, not just in mining but across all industries.”

Dr Meredith added that noise-induced hearing loss is not just limited to noisy workplaces and that other activities or events can contribute to hearing loss.

“Mowing the lawn or listening to loud music can affect hearing over time. Hearing loss can also be a natural part of the ageing process, illnesses affecting the middle ear, or a person’s physical make up in that they might be more prone to hearing loss than others.”

Loss of hearing can have far-reaching consequences if not identified and addressed. It can affect a person’s general wellbeing and quality of life, leading to depression, anxiety and social isolation.

“Unfortunately, by the time someone notices a change in their hearing it is often too late to reverse that damage. CS Health performs hearing tests as part of statutory workplace medicals to identify and monitor hearing loss and encourage early intervention such as sound surveys and fit testing to individually tailor and optimise hearing protection”.

Even if someone experiences hearing loss, properly fitted protective equipment can reduce the effect of repeated noise exposure.

**Corporate Office**

T: +61 (2) 8270 3200  
F: +61 (2) 9262 6090  
Level 21, 44 Market Street  
Sydney NSW 2000  
GPO Box 3842  
Sydney NSW 2001

**Lithgow**

T: +61 (2) 6350 1050  
F: +61 (2) 6351 2407  
3 Proto Avenue  
Lithgow NSW 2790  
PO Box 72  
Lithgow NSW 2790

**Mudgee**

T: +61 (2) 6370 6100  
F: +61 (2) 6372 2470  
18 Sydney Road  
Mudgee NSW 2850  
PO Box 1156  
Mudgee NSW 2850

**Newcastle**

T: +61 (2) 4948 3100  
F: +61 (2) 4953 0541  
143 Main Road  
Speers Point NSW 2284  
PO Box 219  
Boolaroo NSW 2284

**Singleton**

T: +61 (2) 6571 9900  
F: +61 (2) 6572 2667  
1 Civic Avenue  
Singleton NSW 2330  
PO Box 317  
Singleton NSW 2330

**Woonona**

T: +61 (2) 4286 5400  
F: +61 (2) 4285 4144  
558-580 Princes Highway  
Woonona NSW 2517  
PO Box 42  
Corrimal NSW 2518

“If workers are wearing hearing protection and it doesn’t fit properly, they simply aren’t protected. When we perform hearing protection fit testing, we ask workers to don their regular PPE and we test the level of sound that is being transmitted through the earplugs or earmuffs. We then show them how to properly insert their earplugs and re-run the test. It’s amazing the difference.”

### **Ways to protect your hearing**

But how noisy is too noisy? A good test is if you need to raise your voice to talk to someone one metre away, the noise level is probably too high.

The best way to protect your hearing is to eliminate the noise or reduce your exposure to noise as much as you can.

- Be aware of noise sources in the workplace
- Schedule job rotation to reduce your exposure to noise
- Wear earplugs or earmuffs (and make sure they fit correctly!)
- Limit the volume of loud music or television to just enough so you can enjoy it comfortably
- Be careful when listening to music through headphones or ear buds
- Get your hearing checked as soon as you notice a difference.

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### **Fast facts:**

- Noise is considered excessive if you need to raise your voice to be heard by someone a metre away.
- Normal speech occurs at around 60 decibels; harmful noise is around 85 decibels.
- Hearing loss is gradual and accumulates over time.
- Exposure to excessive noise can also affect psychological health including anxiety, depression, fatigue, sleeplessness, affect memory and decision making.

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### **For more information please contact:**

**Belinda Ward**—Marketing Manager Coal Services

Mobile: 0419 148 135

[belinda.ward@coalservices.com.au](mailto:belinda.ward@coalservices.com.au)

### **About Coal Services:**

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Coal Services is an industry-owned organisation committed to providing critical services and expertise to the NSW coal mining industry.

We are a Specialised Health and Safety Scheme that provides an integrated suite of services aimed at preventing injury and illness in the workplace. These services help employers to identify, assess, monitor and control many risks inherent in the NSW coal mining industry.

Our preventative and responsive services in the areas of occupational health and safety, workers compensation, mines rescue and training help to deliver on our purpose 'to protect'.

We are jointly owned by two shareholders, the NSW Minerals Council and the Mining and Energy Union. Our purpose, vision and values are aligned to focus on the safety and health of our industry and its workers.

Please visit: [www.coalservices.com.au](http://www.coalservices.com.au)