

Healthy Hearing 2010

Working together to meet the objectives
of Healthy People 2010



N I D C D National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders

Healthy People 2010—and Healthy Hearing

What Is *Healthy People 2010*?

Healthy People 2010 is a program led by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to help all Americans improve their overall health. *Healthy People 2010* serves as a guide for individuals, groups, and entire communities to set up programs and activities that help people learn the necessary steps for good health and disease prevention.

How Does *Healthy People 2010* Address Hearing?

Healthy People 2010 identifies eight objectives for reducing the problems caused by hearing loss. The hearing objectives are:

- *Increase the number of newborns who get their first hearing test before they're one month old. Children found to have a hearing loss should get additional testing before they're three months old, and should be enrolled in rehabilitative services by the time they are six months old.* Research tells us that babies who are born deaf or hard-of-hearing have a better chance of learning how to use language if the hearing loss is found immediately after they're born and if they learn a spoken or signed language as early as possible.

Until recently, hearing loss often wasn't found until a child was two to three years of age. When this happens, the child's chances of learning how to use language are much smaller than they would have been had the hearing loss been discovered earlier. Children who are unable to understand or use language have more difficulty succeeding in school and learning social skills. For this reason, many states are testing infants for hearing loss right after they're born.

- *Decrease the number of ear infections in children.* Ear infections are the number one reason for all doctor and emergency room visits by infants and children. The cost of ear infections to the American public is enormous—roughly \$5 billion a year for medical expenses and lost wages. For many children, ear infections tend to occur again and again. When a child has an ear infection, he or she won't be able to hear clearly, which can interfere with speech and language development.



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Healthy Hearing
2010 Web site at
www.nidcd.nih.gov

- *Increase the number of deaf or hard-of-hearing people who use rehabilitation services and adaptive devices, such as hearing aids or cochlear implants.* In today's world, people must be able to communicate with others as well as understand how to use technology. Technological devices are available now that can help children and adults who are deaf or hard-of-hearing be successful in society and the workplace. In addition, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provides technological assistance to deaf and hard-of-hearing infants and older children to help ensure they receive a quality educational experience alongside their hearing peers.
- *Increase the number of people who schedule periodic hearing examinations.* Some forms of hearing loss appear later as a child grows and develops. For this reason, not only should children have their hearing screened at birth, but they should be tested and diagnosed any time a hearing loss is suspected. This is also true for adults. Children also should have their hearing tested before they enter school.
- *Increase the number of people who are referred by their doctor for a hearing evaluation and, if needed, treatment.* The referrals depend on a number of factors, including the type of hearing loss, the age at which hearing loss occurs, the services available in a community, and a family's preferences.
- *Increase the use of ear protection devices and equipment, such as earplugs or earmuffs.* Noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) happens when sensitive parts of the inner ear are damaged from being exposed to harmful sounds. The damage is caused by sounds that are too loud, or by loud sounds that are too close or that are heard over a long period of time. NIHL is 100 percent preventable, but once it happens, the hearing loss is permanent. Earplugs and protective earmuffs will protect your hearing when you are exposed to loud noise. NIHL is one of the most common occupational injuries and the second most self-reported type of occupational illness or injury. Industries that have high numbers of workers exposed to NIHL include agriculture, mining, and construction.
- *Reduce the number of children, teenagers, and adults suffering from noise-induced hearing loss.* About 30 million Americans are exposed to dangerous levels of noise every day and 10 million Americans already have hearing loss from noise. Sounds that can cause damage include a chainsaw (110 decibels, or dB), ambulance siren (120 dB), 12-gauge shotgun (165 dB), hair dryer or gas-powered lawn mower (90 dB), and a rock concert or firecracker (140 dB). Regular exposure to 110 dB for more than one minute risks permanent hearing loss. More than 15 minutes of unprotected exposure to 100 dB also is damaging. Prolonged exposure to any noise above 90 dB can cause gradual hearing loss. *Healthy People 2010* highlights the efforts of WISE EARS![®], an NIHL prevention and education campaign led by the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) in partnership with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

I Support Healthy Hearing. How Can I Get Involved?

Schools, community groups, and other local organizations can launch Healthy Hearing projects right in their own communities to educate people about the importance of Healthy Hearing 2010. Examples of activities include holding an open house or a health-awareness day at a local health clinic, organizing a family health fair at a local mall, setting up a Healthy Hearing display at the library or a local store, holding a poster contest for children that shows ways to have healthy hearing, selling T-shirts or holding a silent auction as a fundraiser, or conducting a noise-induced hearing loss awareness program in the community. To find out more information on how your state or community can turn the objectives into actions, see the Healthy People Toolkit at www.health.gov/healthypeople/state/toolkit.

Where Can I Get More Information?

To find out more about *Healthy People 2010* and the hearing-related objectives, visit NIDCD's Healthy Hearing 2010 Web site at www.nidcd.nih.gov/healthyhearing/index.htm. NIDCD also has many publications, some in Spanish, on disorders and diseases of hearing, balance, smell, taste, voice, speech, and language. We also can provide information about other NIDCD health education efforts, such as WISE EARS![®], which includes materials for kids, teachers, and parents, and our resource directory, which links to hundreds of national, state, and local hearing-related organizations. All information is available online at www.nidcd.nih.gov, or by writing or calling:

NIDCD Information Clearinghouse

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Bethesda, MD 20892-3456

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Toll-free TTY: (800) 241-1055

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