

## How dangerous is gunfire to my hearing?

The sound of gunfire is the most hazardous non-occupational noise to which Americans are exposed. The table below lists the peak sound pressure levels of typical guns. What is so dangerous about peak levels such as these is that a single shot experienced by an unprotected ear can lead to immediate and permanent hearing loss, often accompanied by tinnitus (ringing, hissing, or humming in the ears). Just because you might have shot without protection in the past, and without apparent hearing loss, does not mean you might not get hurt the next time. Exposure to peaks sound pressures can be likened to dropping a glass bottle. Sometimes it breaks and sometimes it doesn't; you can't predict the outcome.

Hearing protection should always be worn when firing guns. Some will even choose to use dual protection because it reduces the sounds even further for greater protection, and for some, for better shooting as well (since the pulses are lower and the likelihood of flinching is reduced).

Peak Sound Pressure Levels (SPLs)	
Type of Gun	SPL (dB)
.44 Revolver	170 dB
45 Automatic	165 dB
M-16	160 dB
.357 Revolver	160 dB
12 Gauge Shotgun	155 dB
.38 Revolver	150 dB
.22 Rifle	145 dB