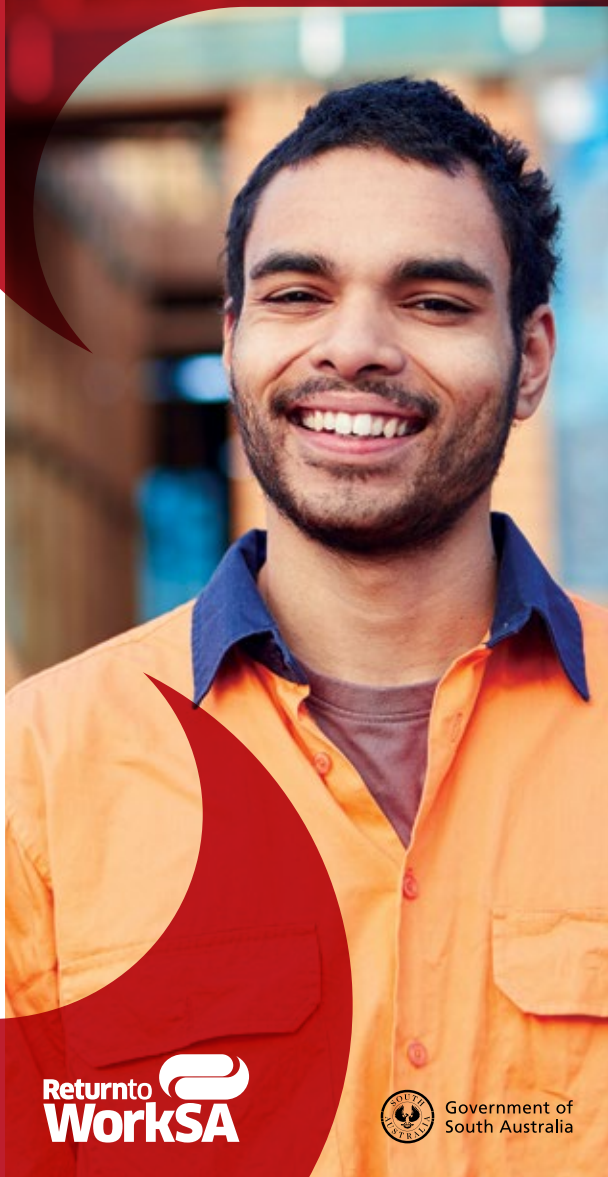


NOISE-INDUCED HEARING LOSS AND HEARING SERVICES

Information for workers



Returnto
WorkSA



Government of
South Australia



What is noise-induced hearing loss?

It typically refers to hearing loss caused by spending an extended period in a noisy environment, which can include a workplace, or involvement in noisy social activities (shooting, music, motorsport, etc.). Hearing loss can also occur after exposure to a sudden injurious level of sound.

Noise-induced Hearing Loss (NIHL) usually affects both ears and is permanent.

What causes hearing loss?

Hearing loss may be related to your genetics, ageing, noise exposure or acquired medical conditions affecting the ear. There are many other causes of temporary or permanent hearing loss such as infections and diseases of the ear.

How do I know if I have hearing loss?

You may notice communication is difficult, frustrating, and beginning to impact on your life. Some of the symptoms of hearing loss include:

- feeling like people are mumbling or speaking in soft voices;
- needing to turn the volume up on the TV or radio;
- needing to ask people to repeat themselves;
- difficulty hearing on the phone or missing the phone when it rings;
- finding having conversations more tiring or fatiguing, particularly in noisy environments.

What do I do if I think I have hearing loss related to my employment?

Like any injury, symptoms should be discussed with your medical practitioner who may be able to assist with investigations, help determine the cause, and develop an appropriate treatment plan. This may include seeing an Audiologist or Audiometrist to evaluate your hearing loss and provide information about the nature and extent of any hearing loss.

If you work in a noisy workplace, you may also talk to your employer who can help you lodge a claim for noise-induced hearing loss. Claim lodgement is straightforward. You don't need to obtain legal representation to lodge a workers' compensation claim for noise-induced hearing loss.

You can access free legal information and guidance by calling SA Unions Workers' Compensation Service on (08) 8279 2220, the Legal Services Commission on 1300 366 424, or speaking with your union representative.

If you are not sure what to do or just want further information, you can call ReturnToWorkSA on 13 18 55 or visit www.rtwsa.com



What can employers do?

Employers can reduce the incidence of work-related noise-induced hearing loss and have an obligation to identify hazards and reduce the risk of noise-related work injuries.

They should:

- identify and assess noise in the workplace
- implement controls to eliminate or reduce worker exposure to workplace noise
- confirm personal protective equipment provided to workers is used correctly, maintained, and is appropriate for the noise exposure
- enforce hearing loss policies and procedures
- undertake health monitoring of workers exposed to noise
- undertake pre-employment and post-employment assessments of hearing for workers exposed to noise.



What does an Audiologist or Audiometrist do?

Audiologists and Audiometrists specialise in the diagnosis, management and treatment of hearing, balance, or ear problems. They can determine the severity and type of hearing loss, and develop a plan for treatment and work in collaboration with an Ear, Nose and Throat Specialist; a specialist medical doctor who treats disorders of the ears, nose, or throat. You can find an Audiologist near you by scanning the QR code.



What if I am not currently employed and want to lodge a claim?

Claim lodgement is straightforward, however you can call ReturnToWorkSA on 13 18 55 for assistance or speak with your self-insured employer.

Whilst you do not need to obtain legal representation to lodge a workers' compensation claim for noise-induced hearing loss, you can access free legal information and guidance from SA Unions Workers' Compensation Service on (08) 8279 2220, the Legal Services Commission on 1300 366 424 or by speaking with your union representative.

What happens after I lodge a workers compensation claim?

One of ReturnToWorkSA's claims agents, Gallagher Bassett, EML, or your self-insured employer will contact you and guide you through the process of gathering relevant medical and employment related information to decide about any entitlement to compensation you may have. It may be necessary for you to attend an independent medical examination.

What compensation can I expect if I have an accepted noise-induced hearing loss claim?

The Return to Work scheme will pay for reasonable costs of a range of hearing services like audiograms, hearing aid fittings and assessments, and devices such as hearing aids and batteries.

In addition to meeting the cost of necessary medical expenses reasonably incurred, you may be entitled to a payment of lump sum compensation, which the claims agent will arrange and manage on your behalf. As part of this process, the claims agent will help you select an accredited permanent impairment assessor of your choice.

Is there a time limit for making a hearing loss claim?

Generally, claims must be lodged within six months of when entitlement to lodge a claim occurs; however, not meeting this time limit does not mean a claim cannot be lodged and a decision made about your entitlements.

Who delivers my hearing services?

It is your choice who provides your hearing assessments, treatment services and hearing devices. Generally, you would see an Audiologist or Audiometrist who often work in collaboration with an Ear, Nose and Throat Specialist.

Where do I go if my claim is rejected, or my hearing loss is not related to work?

Many factors, other than exposure to loud noise at work, cause hearing loss. If your claim is rejected, you can discuss this with:

- the claims agent
- your self-insured employer
- your union
- SA Unions Workers' Compensation Service.

You may wish to review this decision.

In addition, the federal government, through the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, provides subsidised hearing services and devices to eligible Australians with hearing loss through the Hearing Services Program.

For more information about this program, call 1800 500 726 or scan the QR code.

Please note, the Return to Work scheme will not pay for products or services that have been funded by an existing government Scheme.



Visit us

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Opening hours

8:30am – 5:00pm Monday to Friday

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If you are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment, you can call ReturnToWorkSA on **13 18 55** through the National Relay Service (NRS) **www.relayservice.gov.au**.

For languages other than English, call the Interpreting and Translating Centre on **1800 280 203** and ask for an interpreter to call ReturnToWorkSA on **13 18 55**.

For braille, audio or e-text of the information in this publication call **13 18 55**.

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