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Tips on the use of noisy toys

This document is intended for parents

If you believe that the sound level
of a toy exceeds the acceptable limit,
you may contact the Regional Office
of Consumer Product Safety at
1-866-662-0666
(Health Canada, www.sc-hc.gc.ca).



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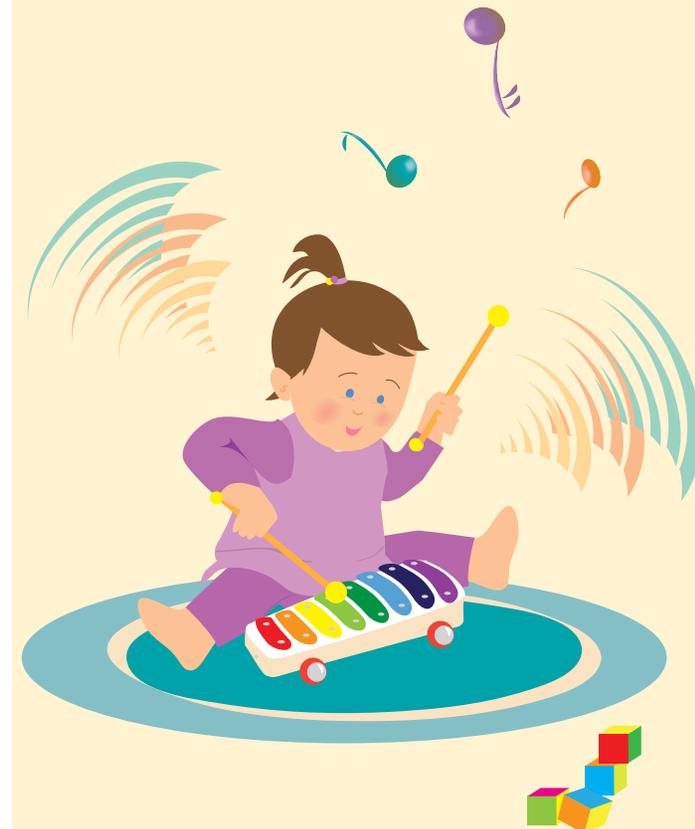
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This document contains information concerning the
impact of noise exposure on the hearing of children who
use noisy toys.

The aim is to support parents by providing recommen-
dations related to the purchase of noisy toys, as well
as tips to reduce the negative effects associated with
their use.



Parents should be aware of the effects that noisy toys can have on their children.

Any sound-emitting toy constitutes a source of noise. These, like noise in general, may have negative effects on a child.

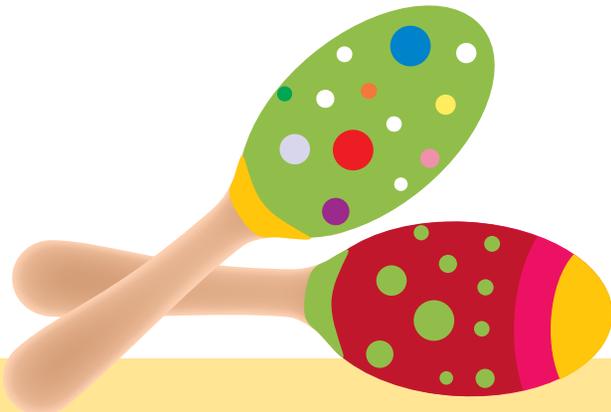
Noise is stressful

In early times, when a person heard a noise, they had to react quickly. The noise warned them that they had to either defend themselves or run away. Essentially, noises served as warning signals and would provoke stress.

Stress impacts our body. It produces hormones and tenses our muscles. Certain noises can produce stress. They have the same effects on our body, even if we are not aware of it.

For example, an adult in the kitchen notices the calm that settles when the sound of a home appliance stops.

A noisy toy can be a source of stress for your child and those around him.



Noise is harmful to communication

It becomes harder to hear in a noisy environment than in a quiet environment. In noisy environments, sections of speech can be masked by noise. An adult guesses sections of speech that have not been heard, taking into consideration the context as well as the sentence. For example, if someone says, «I went fishing and caught a (...)», an adult will be able to deduce that it is a fish.

However, a child does not necessarily have enough knowledge to deal with the missing sections of the message. Listening difficulties in noise are therefore more important in children than in adults. The presence of noisy toys, like other sources of noise, can hinder a child's comprehension of speech.

Therefore, understanding speech will be demonstrably harder for your child if noisy toys are activated around him or her rather than in a quiet environment.

Noise can affect hearing

Prolonged and repeated exposure to loud noises can cause permanent hearing impairment. The World Health Organization (WHO) states that noises exceeding 70 dB (decibels) are not safe for hearing.

The hearing loss associated with noise exposure may take several years to become evident; damage tends to slowly build over time.



As such, your child may damage their hearing with prolonged and repeated use of a toy producing a high volume.

Tips before buying sound-emitting toys

- Listen to the toy: while you may not be able to determine the exact noise level and potential effect on your child's hearing, you can estimate if the toy is too loud by trying it. If in a quiet shop you have to raise your voice to speak while the toy is running, then the volume of the toy is too loud.
- Look for toys with a stop button or a volume control.
- Applications available on some cell phones can estimate noise level. Make sure the noise level is below 70 dB (decibels) when the cell phone is leaning against the toy's speaker.

Tips to reduce the negative effects of noisy toys

- Remove the battery
- Turn off the toy, if possible.
- Reduce the volume of the toy using the volume control, if possible. If the toy does not have a volume control, apply tape to cover the speakers so as to limit the volume at the output.
- Supervise the child so that he does not hold the toy too close to their ears for a prolonged period.
- Use noisy toys for short periods of time and swap them out for quieter toys.

