

Since being posted on YouTube, Sarah Churman's video has been viewed over 26,000,000 times. Sarah, born deaf, was 29 years old at the time, a young mother of two that had never heard her children's voices or her husband's snores. We see her as she hears her own voice for the first time after a cochlea implant. Her genuine expression of joy spoke to us. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVasnb1vbcU>.

Baby Lachlan's expressions are priceless after he receives his first hearing aids. This YouTube has been viewed over 14 million times. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UUP02yTKWWo>

How can we turn these emotions into action to prevent Noise Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL)? How do we get folks to value their hearing as if they had been given a precious gift – which hearing truly is?

If you are reading this, you may already know the impact loud noise has on our ability to hear and hear clearly. You may already know that NIHL is one of the most common work-related illnesses in the United States. NIHL is a serious problem, regardless of how it is measured. It takes a financial toll on business and industry through penalties and in workers' compensation claims. It is estimated that \$242 million is spent annually on workers' compensation costs related to hearing loss.

The human costs are truly immeasurable. With the loss of hearing, communication with family, friends and co-workers may become difficult, leading individuals to feel isolated. Once routine activities such as attending church or dining out may become too challenging, too stressful. Family members may become annoyed at the hearing impaired individual because they are asked to repeat themselves. Special events such as concerts, movies or plays may not bring the pleasure they once brought. With no outwardly visible signs of hearing loss – no bleeding, no pain – hearing loss continues to be an often-underrated loss to an individual.

It has been estimated that nearly 50 million Americans suffer from hearing loss, including **1 in 5 teenagers!** Prevention is the key!

To minimize risks and reduce NIHL we must have a strong hearing conservation program at our worksite **and** in home environment. Each worksite with noise exposures should have a strong hearing conservation program. The program should include noise exposure monitoring, engineering and administrative controls audiometric evaluations, hearing protection and a continuous improvement program.

Thankfully, there are new partnerships and new innovations that are translating research and science to interventions to **prevent** NIHL. For example, earlier this year (October 2016) NIOSH, OSHA and MSHA hosted the "Hear and Now" Noise Safety Challenge. This contest brought together researchers, inventors and entrepreneurs to design new technologies to reduce work-related hearing loss. Some of the highlights of the contest included:

Innovation in hearing protection devices such as sensors and wearables
Engineering controls to reduce the generation of noise at its source
Effective prognosis techniques for early prognosis of NIHL

Can you embrace some new approaches and new technologies to reduce your workers' risks to NIHL?

Back to Sarah, weeks after her video went viral, she was invited to be on *Ellen*. When Ellen asked Sarah what were some of her favorite sounds, Sarah answered rain, thunder, birds, and laughter. What are your favorite sounds? Take a moment and really focus. What are those favorite sounds that you treasure, that bring you joy? Do you want to be able to hear them clearly for as long as possible?

Are you doing all you can to protect your hearing, your co-workers' hearing, and your family's hearing?

There are many sources from government agencies to professional associations and non-profits that provide useful tools you can use. Below are some of my favorites:

OHD

www.ohdusa.com/products

Hearing Health Foundation

Email: info@hhf.org

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

www.cdc.gov/niosh/

American Industrial Hygiene Association

www.aiha.org

Or for a directory of organizations that provide information on a range of communication disorders, visit the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders.

Email: nidcdinfo@nidcd.nih.gov



[Home](#)

Directory of Organizations

The NIDCD Directory lists selected national organizations that provide information on communication disorders.

Use one of these **three options** to find an organization with information on your topic:

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or

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- ≡ [Hearing/Deafness](#)
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 acoustic schwannoma
 age-related hearing loss
 American Sign Language
 Americans With Disabilities Act, advice
 aphasia
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Capture the joy we see in Sarah's and baby Lachlan's faces and embrace a new and revitalized approach to preventing NIHL.