

Preventing Noise-Induced Hearing Loss

If you read our fall 2018 issue, you know that the NIHL project began in the summer of 2018, with Hear Québec animators visiting summer camps. This program teaches children aged 8-12 years about noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL). With more and more young people being exposed to noise, Hear Québec decided that something had to be done to begin raising awareness about this serious issue.

In just eight weeks, we were able to reach almost 500 children. We saw such an impact during the summer with this program: kids enthusiastically wanted to learn about sound, the ear and how they could protect their hearing from dangerous sounds. Hear Québec wanted to continue the momentum by going into schools and teaching students in grades 5 and 6 about NIHL.

In order to do this, we partnered with The Hearing Foundation of Canada (THFC) whose Sound Sense program has been used in schools in some areas of Canada for a number of years. Sound Sense is an education-based program, a good complement to the recreational presentation Hear Québec developed and implemented over the summer. Both presentations cover the same important issues related to NIHL.

Sound Sense presentations start with a discussion about sound in general, their favourite sounds (the sound of a candy bar being unwrapped seems to come up often) and their favourite song or music.

We continue with discussing how sound is measured in decibels and the difference between low and high decibel sounds. During this discussion, children are familiarized with the sound meter and they really enjoy measuring the sounds they themselves make — tapping on their desks or saying “shhhh,” for example.

Our animator then plays a 15-minute video covering sound, the ear, how loud sounds can damage the ear, and how to protect your hearing. Unique to Hear Québec, this is followed by a Hearing Journey: a short, personal anecdote from the animator, who herself is hard of hearing. This part of the presentation educates the students about living with hearing loss, some of the challenges a hard-of-hearing person might face, and how they, as individuals with “normal” hearing, might feel if they had to face these challenges.

Most importantly, we teach children how to prevent NIHL. Sound Sense relays 3 prevention methods: *Turn Down*, *Walk Away* and *Use Ear Protection*. Hear Québec adds an additional prevention method: *Less Time*. We highlight that throughout our lives, we take precautions such as applying sunscreen, wearing a helmet on a bike, and using a seatbelt to protect ourselves. Protecting our hearing from the loud sounds in our environment should be a priority as well. NIHL is 100% preventable, and once your hearing is damaged, you cannot get it back.

In December, we had four presentations and over 70 students participated in this program. In January, we had 13 presentations, with an estimated 260 students attending.



We have received some great feedback about our program thus far from the educators in the classrooms:

“Overall great presentation! Students seemed very interested and actively participated throughout the entire presentation. Great idea giving the students earplugs”.

“Much needed presentation for this group!”

“Great, engaging and informative presentation!”

Our goal for 2019 is 80 presentations. With the help of University of Montreal audiology students, we plan on extending the reach of the program to even more schools across Quebec. We are also looking forward to going back to summer camps in summer, 2019. We are well on our way!

If you would like more information, want to get involved, or would like to book a presentation, please contact the office.

