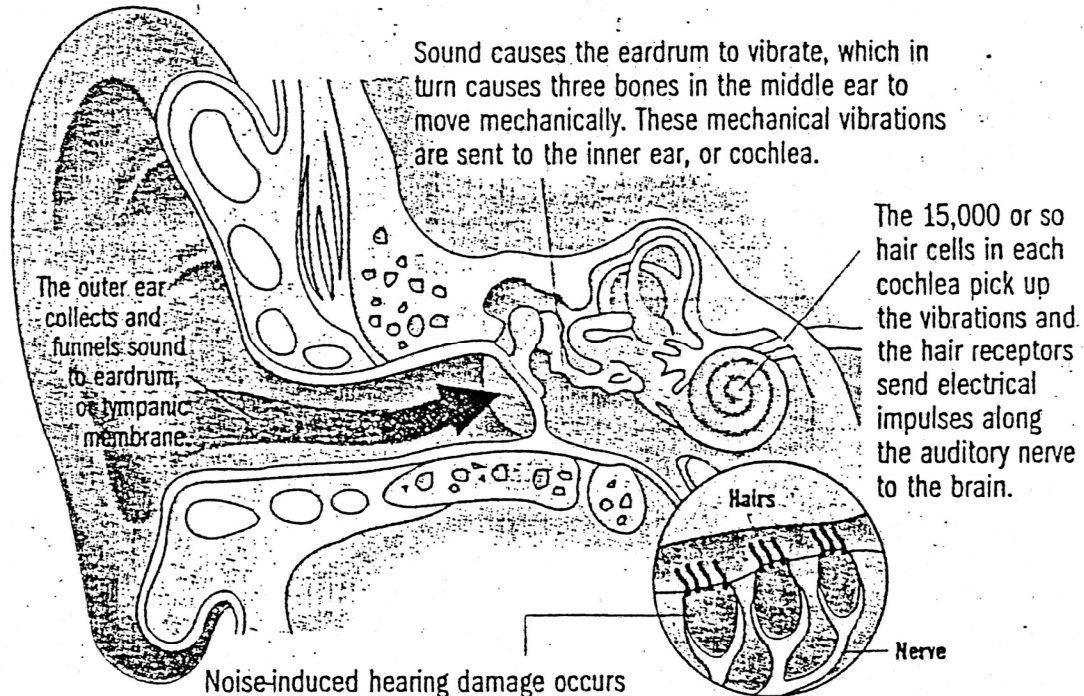


Bad vibrations

'Some people think earplugs are for wimps. But if you don't want to hear any records in five or 10 years, that's your decision' — Metallica drummer Lars Ulrich

How the ear works



Noise-induced hearing damage occurs when the hair cells are blasted away by the force or energy of the sound. While medicine and surgery may repair damage in the outer and middle ear, nothing can be done to the inner ear - which is about the size of a pea.

Environmental noises

Decibal level

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 0: Weakest sound heard | 100+: Emergency siren |
| 60 to 70: Normal conversation | 106: Timpani and bass drum rolls |
| 80: Busy street; dial tone of a telephone | 107: Power mower |
| 85: City traffic heard from inside a car | 110: Power saw; dance clubs |
| 84 to 103: Violin | 120+: Souped up car audio system |
| 85 to 111: Flute | 125: Pain begins |
| 85 to 114: Trombone | 130: Jackhammer; rock concerts |
| 90 to 95: Danger zone - regular sustained exposure can cause permanent hearing damage | 140: Gunshot |
| 94: Average Walkman on 5/10 setting | 150: Jet take-off |
| | 194: Loudest sound that can occur |

SOURCES: Marshall Chasin, director of auditory research at the Musicians' Clinics of Canada and The Star's database.