

Tinnitus

Many Treatments Available

What Is Tinnitus?

Tinnitus is a ringing or other type of noise heard internally that can't be detected by others. More than 50 million Americans share this legitimate but invisible condition to some degree.¹ Severe tinnitus can be distracting, leading to loss of sleep and emotional distress.

Numerous Causes

Numerous causes of tinnitus have been cited, including an accumulation of wax in the ear canal, head and jaw injuries, cardiovascular disease, an underactive thyroid, deterioration of bones in the ear, and exposure to loud sounds. Tinnitus can be a side effect of more than 200 prescription and over-the-counter drugs.¹

Although people with tinnitus often have hearing problems, there is no definitive causal relationship between tinnitus and hearing loss, or vice versa.¹ People who experience tinnitus should contact an audiologist to determine if it is caused by a medical condition.

Treatment Options

While tinnitus may disappear on its own, some people experience chronic symptoms. There are many treatments available. Devices called maskers, which look like hearing aids, produce a sound that diverts the individual's attention from the tinnitus. For people with hearing loss, hearing aids may function like tinnitus maskers and reduce or eliminate the problem.

A second treatment, called tinnitus retraining therapy (TRT), helps the brain "ignore" tinnitus through the use of a device worn in or behind the ear. The device produces sounds softer than the tinnitus. TRT may be conducted for more than a year to achieve maximum benefit.¹

In addition to devices, many types of drugs have been used to alleviate tinnitus, such as anticonvulsants, tranquilizers, anti-anxiety medications, vasodilators and antihistamines.¹

Other treatments include dental treatment for those with jaw joint problems, biofeedback, allergy control and alternative



For More Information

American Academy of Audiology
www.audiology.org

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
www.asha.org

American Tinnitus Association
www.ata.org

Better Hearing Institute
www.betterhearing.org

PHOTO/COURTESY PERSONAL GROWTH TECHNOLOGIES

medicine.¹ Many patients encounter unique remedies that seem to work for them.

Stress Reduction

Many patients first notice tinnitus during periods of high stress. Those who know they have tinnitus may perceive aggravated symptoms in the presence of stress-causing stimuli.²

It often is valuable for people who are experiencing tinnitus symptoms to visit a psychologist to discuss the effects of tinnitus and the impact of stressors. They can learn behavioral techniques to alleviate or change perceptions about their symptoms.²

References

1. American Tinnitus Association. (1998). *Information About Tinnitus*.
2. McKenna, L. (1998). Psychological treatments for tinnitus. In Vernon, J.A. *Tinnitus: Treatment and Relief*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Compiled by Danielle Campbell