

Tinnitus

Tinnitus is any abnormal sound perceived in the ears or head. It can manifest as a ringing, hissing, chirping or any other sensation of noise. It may be intermittent or constant and can vary in pitch. Most of the time, only the person that has tinnitus is aware of the abnormal sound.

Tinnitus affects nearly 36 million Americans, an estimated 7 million of whom correlate the condition to a significant impairment in their quality of life.

What causes Tinnitus?

Tinnitus often is associated with certain types of hearing loss, which is why your doctor will usually recommend a hearing test if you have not already had one recently. Other causes of tinnitus include:

- ◆ Pathologic conditions of the ear: infections, tumors (acoustic neuroma), Meniere's disease, otosclerosis, ear drum perforation.
- ◆ Drug reactions/side effects: Aspirin, NSAIDs (ibuprofen/naproxen), caffeine, MSG, nicotine.
- ◆ Head injuries, cervical spine degeneration.
- ◆ Systemic diseases: Arthritis, diabetes, high blood pressure.

Is it possible to cure my Tinnitus?

If a cause for your tinnitus can be identified, treating it will often lead to resolution of the tinnitus. However, in many circumstances and despite extensive testing, the exact cause of your

tinnitus may not be able to be determined. Your doctor will then advise you on ways to help reduce the amount the tinnitus is affecting your quality of life. Some factors that may be suggested include:

- ◆ Masking sounds: Tinnitus is usually worse in more quiet surroundings. A competing sound at a constant low level (ticking clock/radio static/white noise generator) may make the tinnitus less noticeable.
- ◆ Hearing aids: if your tinnitus is associated with hearing loss, a hearing aid may reduce tinnitus as well as allow you to hear better. Our doctors of audiology can counsel you on how to choose the best hearing aid to meet your needs.
- ◆ Avoid exposure to loud sounds/noises and wear hearing protection.
- ◆ Avoid stimulants such as coffee, tea, cola, and tobacco.
- ◆ Exercise daily.
- ◆ Decrease your salt intake and if you have high blood pressure, see your primary care doctor.



- ◆ Stop worrying about the noise: Recognize your head noise as an annoyance. Often concentration and relaxation techniques can help control muscle groups and circulation throughout the body.
- ◆ Alternative/complementary/homeopathic remedies: the effectiveness of these strategies have only been studied in very few cases. Results show that these therapies help a person's general well-being thus eliminating the focus on their head noise.
- ◆ Acupuncture: Recent studies suggest that acupuncture may help certain patients manage their tinnitus better.

Online Resources

If you have further questions or concerns regarding tinnitus, we encourage you to visit the American Tinnitus Association's website at www.ata.org. This website provides additional information and support for tinnitus sufferers.