



Tinnitus

Tinnitus is a physical condition, experienced as noises or ringing in the ears or head, when no such external physical noise is present. Tinnitus is not a disease in itself. It is a symptom of a fault in the auditor (hearing) system, which includes the ears and brain.

Tinnitus is common Approximately 17 to 20 percent of Americans suffer from some degree of tinnitus, varying from mild to severe. The percentage of people who are severely affected is small. It is common for tinnitus to fluctuate with stress or tiredness, but this has no harmful significance.

Types of sounds experienced with tinnitus There are many different sounds associated with tinnitus; some of the most common are:

- Ringing
- Buzzing
- Whistling
- Roaring
- Humming

What causes tinnitus? Among the more common causes of tinnitus are:

- Exposure to loud sounds
- Extreme stress or trauma
- Degeneration ('wear and tear') of the small bones in the middle ear
- Ear problems, such as otosclerosis (fixation of the tiny stirrup bone in the middle ear)
- Meniere's disease (swelling of a duct in the ear)
- Some prescription and non-prescription drugs

Major preventable causes of tinnitus The two major preventable causes of tinnitus are:

- **Exposure to loud noise** - for example, noisy lawn mowers or chainsaws. People at high risk include industrial workers, farmers and transport workers.. Rock concerts, loud music in the car or through headphones.
- **Medications** - for example, some prescription or non-prescription medication . If you have tinnitus, check with your doctor if any of your medications could be the cause.

Avoid exposure to loud noise Loud noises will exacerbate tinnitus. Wear ear protection when using loud tools or at concerts and loud bars. If you have to shout when they are next to you, the volume of the location is too loud.

Avoid Stress There are many studies that stress exacerbates tinnitus. Taking stress to reduce your stress levels may help to reduce tinnitus.

- Meditation / Yoga
- Getting enough sleep and hydrating well
- Hanging out with good friends
- Reading
- Aromatherapy
- Puzzles
- Exercise
- Playing with your pet

Hearing aids Good quality and properly fitting hearing aids can reduce your perception of tinnitus by improving your hearing and taking away the strain of listening.

Medications There are no drugs meant for tinnitus however, sedatives **may** prove helpful in the earlier stages.

Diet A change in your diet can prove helpful. Avoiding high salt foods (limiting your diet to 2000 mg/day of salt), caffeine (black teas, coffees, chocolate or cola sodas) and alcohol. These can worsen one's tinnitus.

Other treatments include

- Tinnitus maskers (WNG) - this can provide temporary relief in early stages.
- Tinnitus retraining therapy - which can reduce your perception of tinnitus.