

Tinnitus (Noises in the Ear)

What is Tinnitus?

Tinnitus is noise from inside the ear or head that only the person who has the tinnitus can hear. The noise can be described as ringing, buzzing, humming, hissing, popping, clicking, whistling, whoosing, chirping, pulsing or roaring.

Tinnitus can be present in one or both ears and can be constant or may come and go. It can occur at different pitches and loudness levels from unbearably loud to very soft. It can change from day to day and is most often noticeable in quiet environments and at night.

Tinnitus can be mild or very bothersome. It can affect a person's work and social life. In severe cases, it can cause headaches, tiredness, insomnia, anxiety, irritability and depression.

How Common is Tinnitus?

More than one million Canadians suffer from severe tinnitus, and many will go to a doctor for their tinnitus. It is estimated that 17% of the population are affected by tinnitus and one in every twenty people with tinnitus have trouble sleeping (SAC).

What Causes Tinnitus?

There are many reasons for noises in the ear. However, in about 40% of tinnitus cases, the cause is unknown (SAC). Some possibilities are listed below:

- hearing loss
- exposure to loud noise
- head injury
- middle ear disease
- wax pressing on the eardrum
- twitching of middle ear muscles
- high cholesterol
- high blood pressure
- some medications (e.g., aspirin, Quinine)
- allergies
- Meniere's disease
- Multiple Sclerosis
- certain types of tumors
- vitamin or mineral deficiencies
- thyroid problems
- jaw problems
- stress
- IV antibiotics
- chemotherapy drugs
- antidepressants
- food additives

What Can Make Tinnitus Worse Than Usual?

- **Foods:** licorice, sultana raisins, honey, raspberries, apricots, oranges, almonds, cashews, olives, ice cream, peas, beans, tomatoes
- **Alcohol:** red wine, grain-based alcohol
- **Caffeinated drinks:** tea, coffee, cola
- **Other drinks:** root beer, tonic water
- **Flavorings:** wintergreen, raspberry, strawberry, peach, nutty, apricot, pineapple
- **Tobacco products**
- **Seasonings:** salt, black pepper, paprika, dried thyme/sage, curry powder, oregano, cumin, cinnamon, cayenne, turmeric, rosemary, Worcestershire sauce, dill, ginger, chives, cloves
- **Stress and fatigue**
- **Exposure to loud sounds**
- **Some medications**
- **High blood pressure**



Is There a Relationship Between Tinnitus and Hearing Loss?

There is a strong connection between tinnitus and hearing loss. Many people with hearing loss complain of tinnitus. People with tinnitus should have their hearing tested by an audiologist to see if they have hearing loss.

What Can be Done for Tinnitus?

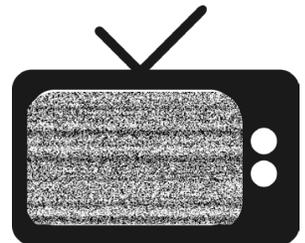
A doctor can check for medical problems or medications that may be causing tinnitus or making it worse. Additionally, a doctor may prescribe medications to help you cope with the stress of tinnitus.

It is common to be upset and irritated by tinnitus. According to a survey by the American Tinnitus Association, about 78% of people seeking medical help for their tinnitus are told “there’s nothing that can be done to help; you’ll just have to live with it”. This is not necessarily true.

Try to cover up the tinnitus:

Many people find that their tinnitus is less noticeable in noisy places because outside noises are easier to tolerate than noise in their head. Any of the following may provide some relief:

- hearing aid (for people with hearing loss)
- tinnitus masker (a device worn in the ear that produces a hissing noise)
- bedside masker (makes a noise to help people sleep)
- radio or television noise
- radio tuned to static
- electric fan noise
- recordings of noise or environmental sounds



Habituation therapy (also known as Tinnitus Retraining Therapy or TRT):

The goal of the therapy is to induce habituation or to allow the patient to become accustomed to their tinnitus. The two strategies that are used should be addressed together (sequentially) for more effective treatment.

- The first strategy is to remove any negative thought or fears associated with tinnitus.
- The second strategy, typically done after successful implementation of the first strategy, is to remove tinnitus from conscious thought process through ‘sound’ therapy. This kind of therapy utilizes noise.

Alternative treatments:

Some people may find relief through acupuncture, herbal remedies, hypnosis or bio feedback training.

Dental treatment:

People who have jaw problems or grind their teeth may find that dental treatment helps with tinnitus.

Additional Resources:

- [Canada Tinnitus Foundation](#)
- [American Tinnitus Association](#)

References: Speech-Language & Audiology Canada (SAC): [Tinnitus Information Sheet](#)

Getting Help

If you suspect a problem, consult a Registered Audiologist (R.Aud). To find a practitioner:

- Contact HEALTH LINK - Health Advice 24/7 at 8-1-1 or visit: www.MyHealth.Alberta.ca
- Enquire at a Public Health Centre or your child’s school.
- Search online to find a private practice audiologist in your area.

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