



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

A persistent sound heard in one or both ears when there is no environmental noise. Tinnitus can be a common symptom of nearly all ear disorders, as well as other medical problems.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

A noise that may be a ringing, buzzing, roaring, whistling, or hissing sound, that is heard in one or both ears. The sound may be continuous, off and on, pulsing, or in time with the heartbeat.

CAUSES

There has probably been some sort of damage to the hearing system, but why this might cause tinnitus is unknown. Tinnitus does not cause deafness, nor does deafness cause tinnitus. They can both occur together in some patients.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Hearing loss.
- Earache or ear infection.
- Labyrinthitis.
- Meniere disease.
- Otitis media or externa.
- Otosclerosis.
- Ototoxicity.
- Earwax blockage.
- Aneurysm or tumor in the head (rare).
- Foreign body in the ear.
- Certain drugs (antibiotics, diuretics, and others).
- High or low blood pressure.
- Head trauma.
- Anemia.
- Hypothyroidism or hyperthyroidism.
- Allergies.
- Exposure to excessively loud noise, either once or over a period of time.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

No specific prevention known.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Treatment of an underlying disorder may help. Often there is no cure, and learning to cope is the only therapy. Some people tolerate the condition much better than others. Research is ongoing to find the cause and effective treatment.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

There are usually no medical complications. Emotional problems may develop due to feelings of distress for those who find the noise very difficult to live with.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider may do a physical exam and an ear exam. Questions will be asked about your symptoms. Medical tests may be done to check for an underlying disorder.
- If tinnitus is ongoing, the treatment is basically finding methods that help to you cope with the constant noise. Try one method for a time to see if it helps. Sometimes, a combination of different methods will work.
- Try to ignore the sound by directing your attention to other things and activities. Counseling or biofeedback training may help you learn to do this technique.
- Play music in the background during the day and while falling asleep.
- Learn techniques to control stress in your life. This helps some people with tinnitus.
- Quit smoking. Find a way to stop that works for you.
- A hearing aid for any associated deafness may help mask tinnitus.
- Wear a tinnitus suppressor or masker. This is a device that fits in the ear like a hearing aid, and presents a more pleasant sound.
- Dental treatment may be recommended.
- Electrical stimulation with cochlear implant may help tinnitus, but it is usually used only for severe deafness.
- Tinnitus retraining therapy (TRT) may help. It combines counseling with sound therapy.
- To learn more: American Tinnitus Association, P.O. Box 5, Portland, OR 97207; (800) 634-8978; website: www.ata.org.

MEDICATIONS

There are no drugs for tinnitus. Drugs normally prescribed for other conditions may help some people.

ACTIVITY

No limits.

DIET

No special diet.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of tinnitus.
- Feelings of distress about tinnitus worsen.

Special notes:

More notes on the back of this page