



# information

## Tinnitus and You

### Information leaflet for patients

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The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email [patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk) if you would like a reference list.

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## Support groups

Visit the British Tinnitus Association website or give them a call to find your local support group.

## Useful websites

### **The British Tinnitus Association (BTA)**

Helpline 0800 018 0527

[www.tinnitus.org.uk](http://www.tinnitus.org.uk)

### **Action on Hearing**

Helpline 0808 808 6666

[www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk)

### **The Hyperacusis network**

[www.hyperacusis.net](http://www.hyperacusis.net)

### **Misophonia UK**

[www.misophonia-uk.org](http://www.misophonia-uk.org)

## Sound enrichment

Using sounds to distract your brain from the tinnitus is called Sound Enrichment. Such things as having a radio or a fan on when the room is quiet, for example at night time when you go to bed, will give your auditory system something else to listen to. It does not have to be loud, just enough to stop the room from being too quiet. There are some other types of sound enrichment equipment that you can buy, such as small speakers you can put in your pillow plus all sorts of CDs with soothing sounds, such as the sea or nature sounds, if you want to try something other than music.

Please see page 7 for suggestions of where to find information on equipment, resources, hearing loss, and of course tinnitus.

You can buy these types of CDs from places like department stores, garden centres and other music outlets.

Hearing aids are beneficial to those with a hearing loss and tinnitus, but must be worn as advised.

## Alternative therapies

Some people say that alternative therapies are beneficial, such as massage or reflexology. There are a variety of different ones you can try; the British Tinnitus Association has a leaflet with extra information on some of them.

## Your appointment

After a full examination by a member of the ENT medical staff, you will either be:

- Reassured and given information leaflets about tinnitus and details of how to access the online tinnitus education tool created by the British Tinnitus Association.  
or
- Referred to audiology for a hearing aid fitting if you have hearing loss and tinnitus.  
or
- Referred to the Tinnitus Clinic if you have troublesome tinnitus and no significant hearing loss for advice on tinnitus management.

You will see an Audiologist who has specialised in tinnitus and hyperacusis.

During your appointment we will:

- ask you first to complete questionnaires
- take a detailed history about your tinnitus or hyperacusis (because the appointment is focusing on your tinnitus or hyperacusis, it may seem as though it is more noticeable during the session. This is usually only temporary).
- explain how the ear works
- explain what tinnitus is
- explain how tinnitus is affected by stress
- discuss ways to help you manage your tinnitus.

## What is tinnitus?

It can be any sound which is generated from within the head, ears or body. It can be many different sounds from ringing, buzzing and rushing, high pitched or low pitched or more complex like music. It is more common in the elderly but can occur at any age. It can be constant or come and go and its onset can be gradual or sudden.

1 person in every 10 experiences tinnitus. It is not an illness or disease, just a symptom which is rarely a sign of something more serious.

Tinnitus can be distressing for some people, while others can live with it and not bothered by it at all.

## What is hyperacusis?

Hyperacusis is when someone has an increased sensitivity to sound. It can affect all ages but is more common in children. People with hyperacusis often find everyday sounds uncomfortable, unpleasantly loud or sometimes even painful. These are sounds which are not generally loud to others, for example a hand drier in the bathroom or a busy shop.

## What causes tinnitus and hyperacusis?

There are many causes of tinnitus and hyperacusis. Some of those are:

- It can be associated with hearing loss and is more common in those with age-related hearing loss.
- Stress, anxiety or depression are common triggers of tinnitus. Triggers can also be life events which may have resulted in a degree of stress in that person's

life, such as illness, operations, retirement, divorce, moving house or bereavement.

- Side effect of certain medication
- Being exposed to excessively loud noise or damage to the ear.

## What can you do about it?

There isn't a cure or quick fix but most people find their tinnitus less intrusive with time. There are many self-help strategies that you can take to make your tinnitus less intrusive and reduce its impact on your daily life.

### Regular exercise and relaxation

Many people find that regular exercise, or activities such as yoga help. Any activity that helps your muscles and your mind relax helps you to feel more relaxed and less anxious generally, and will also help you to feel less anxious about your tinnitus

Try to gain a balanced feeling towards your tinnitus and **try not to worry**. Being over anxious about the tinnitus can cause a negative reaction and make the brain view the sounds as threatening. This then makes the brain more alert to the sounds.

### Avoid silence

Silence can sometimes make tinnitus seem louder. Try not to be in very quiet surroundings. When there are more external sounds, your brain concentrates on these more than the tinnitus sound.