

Tinnitus

Tinnitus is often described as "ringing in the ears." Some people hear hissing, roaring, whistling, chirping, or clicking. Over 50 million Americans have tinnitus.

Tinnitus can be a symptom of other disorders, such as ear infections, Meniere's disease, or blocked arteries.



How does it occur?

The exact cause of tinnitus is not known. Problems that can cause tinnitus or make it worse are:

wax buildup or foreign objects in the ear canal

ear or sinus infections

Meniere's disease

ear, head, or neck injury

otosclerosis (growth of the bone surrounding the middle and inner ear)

hearing loss caused by loud noise or aging

cardiovascular disease, such as blocked arteries or an aneurysm

certain types of tumors

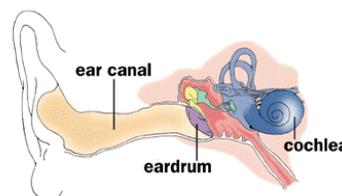
medicines such as some antibiotics, indomethacin, quinine, or aspirin

anxiety

heavy smoking

jaw misalignment

thyroid disorders.



What are the symptoms?

Tinnitus has been described as:

ringing

the sound of escaping air, running water, or the inside of a seashell

a sizzling, musical, buzzing, or humming noise.

How is it diagnosed?

Your health care provider will ask about your symptoms and give you a physical exam.

Tests you might have are:

hearing test

x-rays of your head

angiography (blood vessel studies)

CT or MRI scan of your head.



How is it treated?

Your health care provider may recommend one or more choices for treatment. They may give you partial or total relief from the tinnitus.

Hearing aids if you have hearing loss.



Biofeedback, which is a relaxation technique that teaches you to control certain body functions such as pulse, muscle tension, and brain wave activity.



Some types of medicines, including anti-anxiety drugs, antidepressants, antihistamines, anticonvulsants, anesthetics such as lidocaine, and vasodilators.

Masking the tinnitus with competing sounds, such as low-level music, clocks, or other noises. This may make it easier to ignore the tinnitus and help your ability to concentrate and sleep.



Tinnitus retraining therapy (TRT), which combines low-level, steady background sounds with counseling. This combination helps you grow unaware of the sounds of tinnitus. TRT can take 12 to 24 months.



Dental treatment if you have temporomandibular joint (TMJ).

How long will the effects last?

There is no known cure for tinnitus.

How can I take care of myself?

Stress and fatigue can affect your tinnitus. Take time to relax.



Alcohol, nicotine, caffeine, and certain foods can make tinnitus worse. Talk with your health care provider about this.



If you have hearing loss, avoid further damage by protecting yourself with earplugs or earmuffs, or by avoiding noisy events.

Some medicines can make tinnitus worse. Be sure that you tell all health care providers who treat you about all medicines you are taking, including nonprescription products, vitamins, and natural remedies.

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