



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING SERVICES DIVISION

Tinnitus

The American Tinnitus Association says roughly 15% of all people who live in the U.S. have tinnitus. This means tinnitus is the most common health condition in the U.S. Tinnitus is also the number one identified disability among U.S. veterans.

What is tinnitus?

People who have tinnitus perceive sound when no external noise is present. This can happen for a short time and then stop, or it can be a chronic issue. Tinnitus can sound like hissing, whistling, clicking, static, crickets, screeching, whooshing, roaring, pulsing, ocean waves, dial tones, jackhammers or even music (American Tinnitus Association, “Understanding Facts”).

How are hearing loss and tinnitus connected?

Approximately 90% of people who have tinnitus also have hearing loss. People often do not notice a hearing loss but do notice “ringing in their ears.”

What causes tinnitus?

Tinnitus is a symptom of many underlying health conditions and traumas. Some examples include:

- Metabolic disorders like hypothyroidism or hyperthyroidism
- Autoimmune disorders like fibromyalgia
- High blood pressure
- Depression, anxiety and stress
- Hearing loss
- Head and neck trauma
- Traumatic brain injuries
- Exposure to concussive explosive blasts (American Tinnitus Association, “Causes”).

Tinnitus can also occur as a side effect of ototoxic drugs. Types of drugs that may cause tinnitus can include:

- Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs). Examples of NSAIDs are Motrin, Advil and Aleve.
- Some antibiotics.
- Some cancer medications.
- Diuretics. Diuretics, also called water pills, are used to treat high blood pressure, heart, liver and kidney issues.
- Medicines containing quinine (American Tinnitus Association, “Causes”).

If you experience tinnitus visit your doctor to discuss the cause. Sometimes, if the tinnitus is a side effect of a drug you are taking, it may stop when you stop taking that drug. **Important: Do not stop taking any prescribed medications without consulting your doctor.**

Managing tinnitus



Although tinnitus cannot be cured, people can reduce the impact it has using a variety of strategies:

- General healthy lifestyle activities, including physical activity, getting enough sleep, and good nutrition. Some lifestyle strategies you can try include:
 1. Reducing stress
 2. Meditation
 3. Using white noise machines or apps
 4. Listening to music.
- Test for hearing loss. If hearing loss is found, treat the hearing loss. Discuss appropriate treatment with your audiologist.
- Reduce exposure to loud noise. This should include using good quality ear plugs whenever you are around loud noise.
- Work with a doctor, Ear Nose and Throat specialist and an audiologist to address tinnitus (American Tinnitus Association, “Managing”).
- The American Tinnitus Association’s [Managing Your Tinnitus webpage \(https://ata.org/managing-your-tinnitus\)](https://ata.org/managing-your-tinnitus) has many ideas for adapting to life with tinnitus and reducing the impact tinnitus has on your day to day life.



Additional resources on tinnitus

- [American Tinnitus Association \(https://www.ata.org/\)](https://www.ata.org/).
- [Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Research and Development \(https://www.research.va.gov/topics/hearing.cfm#research4\)](https://www.research.va.gov/topics/hearing.cfm#research4).
- [Hearing Loss Association of America \(https://www.hearingloss.org/\)](https://www.hearingloss.org/).
- [The Hyperacusis Network \(https://hyperacusis.net/\)](https://hyperacusis.net/).
- [Tinnitus Research Initiative \(https://tinnitusresearch.net/\)](https://tinnitusresearch.net/).