

Information about Tinnitus

Tinnitus (buzzing, ringing, roaring, humming, head noises) is defined as the perception of sound in the absence of an external sound source. Tinnitus has many possible causes, although as a symptom it is closely associated with certain disorders of the ear including hearing loss and ear infections. Therefore, it is important that tinnitus be evaluated by an audiologist or an otolaryngologist to determine whether medical intervention is necessary. Approximately 50 million adults are affected by tinnitus, with 10 million seeking medical help for the condition. Around 80% of tinnitus cases are classified as mild and require providing the patient with information and reassurance. The other 20% require medical intervention. In cases where tinnitus does not accompany a treatable medical pathology, there are several strategies you can use to help either reduce tinnitus or alleviate the stress it can cause:

1. Avoid fatigue. Not getting adequate rest can cause unnecessary stress.
2. Avoid caffeine or reduce caffeine intake. Some tinnitus patients who give up all forms of caffeine (coffee, tea, soft drinks, and chocolate) for a period of one month have noted a sizable reduction in the severity of their tinnitus.
3. Reduce or avoid the use of alcohol, and eliminate all nicotine. These substances are known to cause vascular problems.
4. Daily exercise as well as reducing salt intake can help improve blood circulation.
5. Have your blood pressure levels checked and if needed seek medical help to keep it under control.
6. Reduce aspirin intake. Eight or more aspirins daily may exacerbate the effects of tinnitus.
7. Use of low-volume background noise such as radio, fan, or TV may help to increase auditory input.
8. If you have hearing loss that is aided with a hearing aid, use can also help increase auditory input.
9. If tinnitus is aggravated during an airplane flight, use of an earplug before descent until approximately 30 minutes after landing may help.

Statistical data and other information about tinnitus retrieved from www.ata.org. For more information about tinnitus, you can contact the American Tinnitus Association. ATA is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing information and helping those experiencing tinnitus. You can visit their website at www.ata.org, or you can reach them by mail at:

American Tinnitus Association
PO Box 5
Portland, OR 97207
(503) 248-9985