

Tips for managing Tinnitus

(Adapted from the Canadian Academy of Audiology:
<https://canadianaudiology.ca/for-the-public/tinnitus/>)

Resources On the internet:

- The British Tinnitus Association
- The American Tinnitus Association
- “Tinnitus First Aid Kit” from the Ida Institute
- Tinnitus Retraining Therapy (TRT) or Habituation Therapy

Books

- Tinnitus Treatment Toolbox by J. Mayes
- Learning to Live with Tinnitus and Hyperacusis by L. McKenna, D. Baguley, & D. McFerran
- How to Manage Your Tinnitus: A Step-by-step Workbook by J.A. Henry, T.L. Zaugg, P.J. Myers & C.J. Kendall

All three books are available through on-line book sellers and some local libraries.

Have Your Hearing Tested

Addressing even minimal hearing loss can help reduce tinnitus awareness.

Avoid Silence

Being in a very quiet room will make most people notice tinnitus more than being in a noisy room. Finding ways to enrich your sound environment won't get rid of tinnitus but it may help to make tinnitus less noticeable. Tabletop sound generating devices or sound generating apps on a smart phone can make you less aware of tinnitus, especially at night when our homes are quiet and our minds less occupied.

Another effective way to avoid silence is to use hearing instruments. Several models of hearing instruments can be programmed with a sound generator. The sound generator is programmed to play white or shaped noise, patterned tones or even pleasant environmental sounds like ocean waves. Many people find that wearing these instruments throughout the day reduces tinnitus awareness and helps them to relax. Your audiologist can help you decide the best way to use sound to manage tinnitus.

Get a Good Night's Sleep

About half of people with tinnitus report difficulty falling asleep or getting back to sleep. In addition to avoiding silence throughout the night, employ good sleep habits:

- Avoid screen time 2 hours before bed
- Have a consistent and relaxing bedtime routine
- Go to bed only when sleepy
- Get up at the same time every day
- Avoid naps
- Avoid clock-watching
- Keep your computer and TV out of the bedroom

- Keep your room dark and the temperature at about 18 degrees Celsius
- Exercise regularly and not too late in the evening (about 2 hours prior to bedtime)
- Limit use of caffeine, alcohol and nicotine, all of which can disrupt sleep patterns
- Let go of the fear of not sleeping

Reduce Stress

Stress tends to increase tinnitus. Minimize stress in your life where possible and learn how to improve how you react to stressful events. Relaxation is a skill many of us are not very good at. You can improve your ability to relax with daily practice of relaxation exercises such as deep breathing or progressive muscle relaxation. Mindfulness meditation can also help you learn to react less to tinnitus and other experiences.

Protect Your Hearing

Exposure to loud sound can cause tinnitus to emerge or worsen. Protecting your ears from hazardous levels of noise is essential to prevent noise-induced hearing loss and onset or aggravation of tinnitus. This means turning sound down to a safe level when possible and wearing appropriate hearing protection when you can't. This applies at work, play and home. It is also important not to overprotect your ears. People with decreased sound tolerance often overuse hearing protection. This can worsen sound intolerance.

Medications

There are no medications that have been shown to safely and consistently eliminate tinnitus. Some physicians may prescribe anti-depressants or sleep aids to manage the effects of tinnitus.

Certain medications or combination of medications may trigger or exacerbate tinnitus. These include medications known to be toxic to the hearing system (ototoxic drugs) such as aminoglycoside antibiotics, vancomycin and certain chemotherapy agents. Pain medications such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (e.g. ibuprofen, aspirin, naproxen), loop diuretics and quinine (used to treat malaria and leg cramps) may also trigger or exacerbate tinnitus. If you are concerned about a drug that you are or will be taking, discuss your concerns with your prescribing physician.

Diet and Lifestyle

Caffeine and nicotine may worsen tinnitus. Some people notice other specific food triggers. Taking a two-week break from a certain food or beverage that you believe might be contributing to tinnitus, followed by a reintroduction of the food or drink, might tell you if the food or drink is linked to tinnitus. Keep in mind that sudden withdrawal from caffeine can have its own side effects such as headache and fatigue.