

What is Tinnitus?

Tinnitus is the perception of ringing, buzzing or any other sounds in the ears or in the head when no other external noise is present. Tinnitus can be intermittent or can be something that is there all the time. Some people hear it in both ears, but can also be present in one ear only. The volume can be perceived as low, medium or high and it can vary in pitches.

Tinnitus can come in various forms. Occasionally people have tinnitus that can be musical also known as musical tinnitus or musical hallucination. Quite often, people will have tinnitus that sounds like their heart beat, called pulsatile tinnitus.

Facts?

Tinnitus is very common and is reported in all age groups, even young children. About 30% of people will experience tinnitus at some point in their lives but the number of people who live with persistent tinnitus is approximately 10%. Tinnitus is more common in people who have hearing loss or other ear problems, but it can also be found in people with normal hearing.

The experience of tinnitus is different for different people. Most people find that they are able to continue their normal day-to-day activities. However, a small percentage of people with tinnitus report it as severely affecting them.

What causes Tinnitus?

- Exposure to loud noise
- advancing age is generally accompanied by a certain amount of hearing nerve impairment and tinnitus
- A build up of wax
- allergy, high or low blood pressure (blood circulation problems), a tumour, diabetes
- injury to head or neck
- abnormalities in blood vessels around the outside of the ear or by muscle spasms
- side effect of a medication; antibiotics, sedatives, antidepressants, and aspirin

Management/treatment?

There is no cure for tinnitus. There are no medication or treatment options that have been proven to cure tinnitus. Sometimes the cause of tinnitus can not be identified. There are however, possible management that will help with living with tinnitus.

- **Meditation and relaxation** exercises can help to control muscle groups and circulation throughout the body. This has shown to help with people's state of mind. Studies have also shown that tinnitus can be made worse by stress levels or anxiety, fatigue or frustration and even lack of sleep.

- **Maskers/other background noises:** Often people find tinnitus is more noticeable in quiet surroundings. By having a competing sound in the background can help ignore your tinnitus, such as music, radio, or natural environmental sounds, or a masking noise, like a white noise (Maskers are a device that is worn in the ear, similar to a hearing aid).
- **Hearing aid:** Loss of hearing is often an unnoticeable and gradual process, and many people are surprised when they are told that they have a hearing loss. If you have hearing loss, using hearing aids can be helpful for tinnitus because they are restoring what you can't otherwise hear.

Professional support:

- **Cognitive behavioural Therapy (CBT):** this is a psychological approach that can help with the management of tinnitus. It works by identifying the problem and working together with your Audiologist to find different ways to respond to the tinnitus so that it becomes less bothersome.
- **Tinnitus Retraining Therapy (TRT):** TRT uses sound generators and counselling to attempt to retrain how the brain processes sound so that you habituate to the tinnitus.
- **Audiologist/Hearing Aid Dispenser: (HAD):** where there is presence of hearing loss, aiding of the defective frequencies can help alleviate the tinnitus intensity, masking the tinnitus with everyday sounds.

Tinnitus is something that a lot of people find difficult to live and cope with. Quite a lot of the time, we are unable to identify what tinnitus is exactly. There is still on going research that is carried out to find a cure for Tinnitus.

If you feel you would like to speak to our Audiologist for additional information or advice, please email Roopal at Roopal@amplifyhearing.co.uk