

WHAT CAN I DO TO MANAGE MY TINNITUS?

What can help my tinnitus?

Many people are helped by understanding the problem and knowing that they do not have a serious underlying condition. With time, the tinnitus may become less of a problem as you adjust to it. Some regions have special tinnitus clinics that offer counselling, advice on sound therapy, relaxation techniques, and other methods for coping with tinnitus.

What are some of my options?

- **Alternative sounds**



If possible, avoid being in very quiet rooms, where your tinnitus might be more obvious and more distressing to you. Pleasant sounds (e.g., music, radio or TV) can be distracting and help to make the tinnitus less noticeable. Sometimes, leaving a window open to outside sounds can help. Some people wear a sound generator, which looks a little like a hearing aid but makes a pleasant sound to help to mask the unpleasant tinnitus noise.

Tinnitus is often most noticeable at bedtime. If you play a radio or stereo (one with a timer is best, so that it will switch off) or use special pillow speakers, it can help to mask the tinnitus noise until you drop off to sleep. There are websites that have a variety of sounds available for downloading to personal listening devices. There are also many 'white noise' applications available for smartphones and tablets (some may charge a small fee):

- <http://simplynoise.com/>
- <http://whitenoisemp3s.com>

- **Hearing aids**

If you have any hearing loss, even just a slight loss, a hearing aid may help. The aid boosts normal sounds that you may not otherwise hear, and these sounds may override the tinnitus noise.

- **Stress, anxiety and depression**

Some people become anxious or stressed by tinnitus, which can make you feel worse. It may be helpful for you to learn ways to relax and combat stress. Your doctor will make sure there are no serious problems causing your tinnitus. If you become particularly anxious or depressed, ask your doctor about treatment options.

- **Tinnitus retraining therapy (TRT)**

In severe cases, a treatment called tinnitus retraining therapy (TRT) may be used. The tinnitus is not stopped, but TRT helps the brain learn to ignore the tinnitus and be less bothered by it. TRT involves wearing a sound generator (described above) and having regular counselling sessions that aim to help you cope with the tinnitus. TRT can take as long as a year, during which you gradually learn not to focus on your tinnitus until it becomes much less bothersome, even without using the sound generator.

Where can I get more information?

- The Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is a non-profit website that is a rich source of links to resources, including the Tinnitus Associations for Canada and America, the Canadian Academy of Audiology: <http://www.widhh.ca/information/links.php?l3=132>
- The American Tinnitus Association provides extensive information about tinnitus for patients and professionals through their website: www.ata.org
- The Tinnitus Association of Canada also provides personal responses to enquiries.
- Mayo Clinic website: provides all you might need to know about tinnitus from symptoms to treatment to prevention: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/tinnitus/DS00365>
- American Academy of Otolaryngology website on Tinnitus: A good explanation of causes and treatments for tinnitus: <http://www.entnet.org/HealthInformation/tinnitus.cfm>

