

A Simple Guide to Tinnitus: Causes and Remedies

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DESCRIPTION

Tinnitus is a symptom, not a disease, characterized by hearing sounds that others cannot hear. It can be perceived in one or both ears and varies in intensity, tone and duration. Some may experience it as a constant sound, while others may hear it intermittently. Tinnitus is classified into two types: Subjective tinnitus, where only the affected person can hear the sound and objective tinnitus, which can be heard by a healthcare professional using special instruments, though this is much rarer.

Causes of tinnitus

Tinnitus can be caused by a variety of factors, often relating to damage in the auditory system. Common causes include:

Hearing loss: Age-related hearing loss or presbycusis, is one of the leading causes of tinnitus. As people age, the sensory cells in the inner ear may deteriorate, causing both hearing loss and tinnitus.

Noise exposure: Prolonged exposure to loud sound such as loud music, machinery or workplace noise can damage the delicate structures of the inner ear, leading to tinnitus. Even a single loud noise, like an explosion, can cause lasting harm.

Ear infections and blockages: Conditions like ear infections or earwax buildup can cause temporary tinnitus. Once the blockage is removed or the infection is treated, the symptoms may subside.

Medications: Certain drugs, especially those known as ototoxic medications (e.g., high doses of aspirin, certain antibiotics or chemotherapy drugs), can lead to tinnitus as a side effect.

Health conditions: Tinnitus is sometimes linked to medical conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, Meniere's disease, Temporo Mandibular Joint (TMJ) disorders or thyroid problems. In rare cases, it can be a symptom of tumors or other serious conditions.

Impact of tinnitus

Although tinnitus is not life-threatening, it can significantly affect a person's quality of life. Those with chronic tinnitus may experience.

Sleep problems: The constant noise can make it difficult to fall asleep or stay asleep, leading to sleep deprivation and fatigue.

Concentration issues: Difficulty concentrating and focusing on tasks can result from the constant perception of sound.

Emotional distress: Anxiety, depression and irritability are common in people with tinnitus, particularly when it interferes with daily life.

Treatment options for tinnitus

There is no universal cure for tinnitus, but several treatment options can help manage the symptoms.

Hearing aids: For people with hearing loss, hearing aids can amplify external sounds, making the internal tinnitus sounds less noticeable.

Sound therapy: White noise machines, fans or other calming sounds can help mask the tinnitus, making it less intrusive, especially during sleep.

Tinnitus Retraining Therapy (TRT): TRT combines sound therapy and counselling to help individuals retrain their brains to ignore the tinnitus sounds over time.

CONCLUSION

Tinnitus is a condition that, while not life-threatening, can have a significant impact on a person's well-being. With no one-size-fits-all solution, treatment focuses on managing symptoms and improving quality of life. Early intervention, proper diagnosis and lifestyle changes can greatly help those affected. If tinnitus is persistent or affecting daily activities, consulting an audiologist or healthcare provider is required to identify the underlying

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cause and find appropriate treatments. Tinnitus is the perception of sound in the ears or head when no external sound is present, often described as ringing, buzzing or hissing.

It affects millions of people globally and can be either temporary or chronic.