

Tinnitus - Ringing in the ears

What is tinnitus?

Tinnitus (say “tin-night-us”) is a bothersome sound or noise in your ear. You might hear a ringing noise, or you may hear a roaring, buzzing, whistling, chirping, or hissing sound. Sometimes tinnitus is a symptom of a disease, like an ear infection or Meniere’s disease.

What causes tinnitus?

Tinnitus can be caused by an injury to the ear, ear infections, or build-up of wax in the ear, or a number of other ear problems. People who spend a lot of time hearing loud noises like those from construction tools, music, crowds of people, or gun shots might have tinnitus. Tinnitus can also be caused by some pain relievers, antibiotics, antidepressants, sedatives, dental problems, rapid change in environmental pressure, or severe weight loss.

How does my doctor know I have tinnitus?

Usually, only you can hear the tinnitus. Your doctor will examine you to see what could be causing the tinnitus. Your doctor may have you take a hearing test. He or she also may want you to have an x-ray, a CT scan, or an MRI of your head. These tests can help your doctor find the cause of your tinnitus. You should tell your doctor about the medicines you are taking, including vitamins and over-the-counter drugs.

How is tinnitus treated?

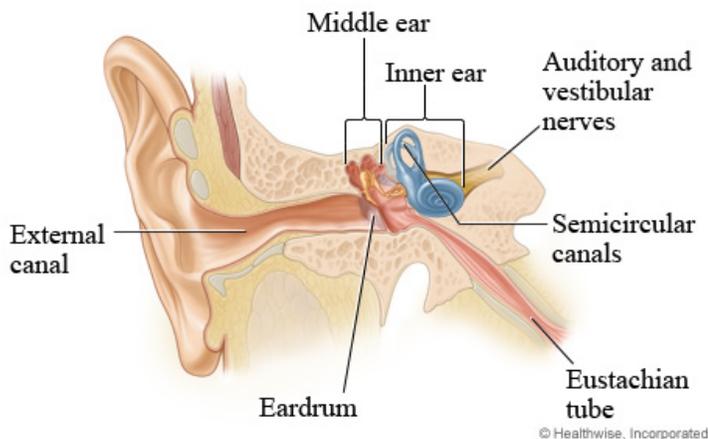
Treating the cause of the tinnitus may make it go away. Sometimes tinnitus goes away without any treatment. If treatment does not make your tinnitus go away, you can still do something so the tinnitus will not bother you as much. For example, you can mask the tinnitus noise by listening to music at a low volume. Some people find that a ticking clock in the room helps. If you have hearing problems and tinnitus, a hearing aid might help make the tinnitus less of a bother.

How can I keep my tinnitus from getting worse?

If your tinnitus gets worse with stress, make sure to do things that decrease the stress in your life and help you to relax. Try to get enough sleep. Cut down on the amount of alcohol and caffeine you drink, and stop smoking if you smoke. These things can make your tinnitus worse. Avoid listening to loud noises. If you cannot avoid loud noises, use silicone ear plugs or ear muffs to protect your ears.

How will I be affected by tinnitus?

Tinnitus can bother you all of the time or some of the time. It can be very annoying. Some people have tinnitus that keeps them from working or sleeping. Talk to your doctor if you feel tinnitus is affecting you emotionally.



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