

Tinnitus Newsletter 2023

Tinnitus awareness week 6-10th February 2023



What is Tinnitus?

Tinnitus is a noise that can be heard when there is no external sound present. Tinnitus can be many different sounds.

What triggers Tinnitus?

- Hearing Loss
- Stress
- Impacted ear wax
- Ear infections
- Various other ear disorders
- Noise exposure
- Some medications

What can I do about my tinnitus?

The good news is that the brain gradually learns to filter the tinnitus out.

There are 3 main things we recommend to help this process:

- Sound enrichment – using other sounds in the background including white noise, music, relaxation apps. Wearing hearing aids can also help if you have a hearing loss.
- Relaxation – managing any underlying stress or mental health disorder can help you to manage your tinnitus
- Distraction – keeping your mind focussed away from your tinnitus and on to other things that you enjoy.

What do I do if feel I can no longer cope with my tinnitus?

If you are already an NHS Forth Valley Audiology patient you can request one of our tinnitus self-help packs to start you on your journey.

If you have already tried the self-help pack and are still having a problem with your tinnitus please contact us on 01786 434171 or e-mail fv.audiology@nhs.scot to discuss whether an appointment with one of our tinnitus specialists would be beneficial.

If you are not already an Audiology patient you can seek a referral from your GP to the Audiology service.

You can also visit the Tinnitus UK (formerly British Tinnitus Association) website for advice at: www.tinnitus.org.uk

Why is there no cure for tinnitus?

We are often asked if there is a pill that can be taken to cure tinnitus. The answer to that is no. The reasons for this are:

- We do not have an accurate view of the number of people who live with tinnitus, without this information it can be difficult to get support from Pharmaceutical companies.
- The true mechanism/pathway of how tinnitus occurs in the brain has been theorised but not yet defined so this makes finding a cure extremely difficult.
- There are numerous different types of tinnitus which may require different treatments.

Current research is focussing on these areas so that we can better understand tinnitus and therefore any treatment which may be beneficial.

Other research

There are many research projects on tinnitus happening around the world.

Currently, as recommended by NICE guidelines the most effective treatments for tinnitus are behavioural therapies which help people to adapt (habituate) to their tinnitus. As mentioned before relaxation, distraction and sound enrichment are extremely beneficial.

We discuss the following methods only as evidence of current research, they have not yet been proven as an effective treatment.

Neuromodulation is a large area of research within tinnitus. There are both invasive and non-invasive methods of stimulating the brain including:

- Transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) - intermittent magnetic fields are delivered through the scalp.
- Neurofeedback – based on operant conditioning where patients are asked to participate in a task using either visual or auditory signals during which brain activity is being monitored. They are either “rewarded” or “punished” depending on results of the task.
- Vagal nerve stimulation – invasive method where the vagal nerve is stimulated using sound.

It is important to note that current research DOES NOT support the use of any of these neuromodulation methods, at the moment they are experimental only.

For more information on research visit the Tinnitus UK website at www.tinnitus.org.uk

Covid 19/Covid 19 Vaccine and tinnitus.

There has been some research to suggest that there is a link between both covid 19 & the covid 19 vaccines and tinnitus.

- Covid 19 virus - as tinnitus can have many causes it is difficult to establish an exact link. It may be that tinnitus is an indirect side effect of the virus caused by stress, brain fog, poor sleep, hearing loss (including middle ear congestion) etc.
- Covid 19 vaccine – according to a recent safety review by the Medicine and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) of the current vaccines used in the UK, tinnitus is classed as a “rare side effect” of the vaccine.

Resound relief app

The Resound Relief app is one of the most useful apps in the market for relieving and managing tinnitus. As part of a tinnitus management program, the Resound Relief app offers a combination of sound therapy, relaxing exercises, meditation and guidance, whenever you want and wherever you are. This can be found at:

<http://www.resound.com/en-US/hearing-aids/apps/relief-app>



Next Issue

Stay tuned for our next issue for more tinnitus updates.