

FACT SHEET

The Noise in Your Ears

Facts About Tinnitus

Do you hear a ringing, roaring, clicking, or hissing sound in your ears? Do you hear this sound often or all the time? Does the sound bother you a lot? If you answer yes to these questions, you may have tinnitus (tin-NY-tus).

Tinnitus is a symptom associated with many forms of hearing loss. It can also be a symptom of other health problems. According to estimates by the American Tinnitus Association, at least 12 million Americans have tinnitus. Of these, at least 1 million experience it so severely that it interferes with their daily activities. People with severe cases of tinnitus may find it difficult to hear, work, or even sleep.

What causes tinnitus?

- **Hearing loss.** Doctors and scientists have discovered that people with different kinds of hearing loss also have tinnitus.
- **Loud noise.** Too much exposure to loud noise can cause noise-induced hearing loss and tinnitus.
- **Medicine.** More than 200 medicines can cause tinnitus. If you have tinnitus and you take medicine, ask your doctor or pharmacist whether your medicine could be involved.
- **Other health problems.** Allergies, tumors, and problems in the heart and blood vessels, jaws, and neck can cause tinnitus.

What should I do if I have tinnitus?

The most important thing you can do is to go see your doctor. Your doctor can try to determine what is causing your tinnitus. He or she can check to see if it is related to blood pressure, kidney function, diet, or allergies. Your doctor can also determine whether your tinnitus is related to any medicine you are taking.

To learn more about what is causing your tinnitus, your doctor may refer you to an otolaryngologist (oh-toe-lair-in-GAH-luh-jist), an ear, nose, and throat doctor. He or she will examine your ears and your hearing to try to find out why you have tinnitus. Another hearing professional, an audiologist (aw-dee-AH-luh-jist), can measure your hearing. If you need a hearing aid, an audiologist can fit you with one that meets your needs.

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