

## TINNITUS

### WHAT IS TINNITUS?

Tinnitus is the perception of sound in the head or ear when there is not sound present in the environment. Typically, it is referred to as "ringing," but may include other sounds such as hissing, pulsing, roaring, whooshing, chirping and clinking.

Tinnitus may occur in either one or both ears and can be a symptom of hearing loss but may also exist without hearing loss.

### STATISTICS:

Tinnitus is a common problem that is experienced by almost everyone at one time or another. According to the American Tinnitus Association, as many as 40-50 million Americans consider their tinnitus to be a problem, 10-12 million seek professional help for their condition and 2.5 million are debilitated by their tinnitus (Journal of American Academy of Audiology, volume 13, no.10, November/December 2002).

### CAUSES OF TINNITUS:

Various theories exist on the causes of tinnitus. For the most part, the cause remains unknown and is identified only when a specific factor is linked to the appearance or disappearance of the tinnitus. A few known contributors and/or causes of tinnitus are as follows: blows to the head, ingestion of large doses of certain medications including aspirin, anemia, hypertension, noise exposure, stress, impacted ear wax and certain types of tumors.

### WHAT TO DO ABOUT TINNITUS:

The first step is attempting to diagnose the underlying cause through a medical examination that provides special attention to factors that are associated with tinnitus, such as blood pressure, kidney function, drug intake, diet and allergies. You should also receive a hearing evaluation conducted by an audiologist to determine if hearing loss is present.

### TREATMENT FOR TINNITUS:

Various treatments for tinnitus exist, including drug therapy, vitamin therapy, biofeedback, hypnosis, tinnitus maskers and tinnitus retaining therapy. Self-help groups are also available for sharing information and coping strategies. Further information regarding various treatments and self help groups is available from the American Tinnitus Association at [www.ata.org](http://www.ata.org) or PO Box 5, Portland, Oregon 97207.