



Tinnitus

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Helpful information for people with tinnitus

Tinnitus is the perception of sound that does not come from an external source, meaning others around you cannot hear it. It is a symptom rather than a mental health disorder or disease.

The sound is genuinely perceived by the auditory system; it is not imagined or hallucinated. Tinnitus is a neutral, harmless sound that does not interfere with hearing or cause damage to the auditory system.

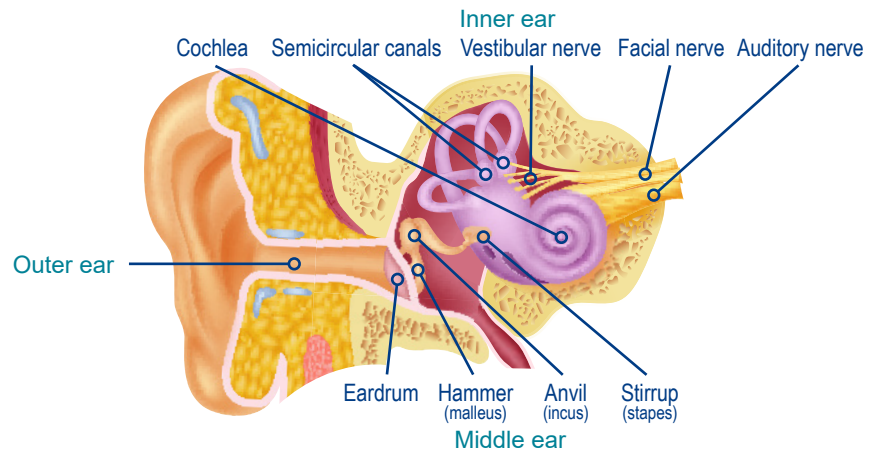
The type of sound experienced **varies from person to person**, and may include:

- ringing;
- clicking;
- pulsing;
- buzzing;
- crackling;
- etc.

The sound **may be perceived**:

- occasionally or constantly;
- with varying intensity (louder or softer);
- in one ear, both ears, or within the head.

The **auditory system** includes the ears and the entire pathway sound travels to reach the brain.



What might cause my tinnitus?

While there are many hypotheses, no single cause of tinnitus has been proven. Tinnitus can be caused by a number of factors.

It is believed that the brain may generate a sound to compensate for even a minor loss of hearing. In most cases, a direct cause cannot be identified. Unfortunately, there is no known cure for tinnitus. **However, the degree of discomfort can often be reduced.**

Did you know?

- 37% of Canadians aged 20 to 79 experience tinnitus;¹
- Hearing loss and tinnitus are not always related. You may experience:
 - Hearing loss without tinnitus;
 - Tinnitus with normal hearing;
 - Tinnitus along with hearing loss.

¹ Statistics Canada, 2021

Why is tinnitus disruptive?

Tinnitus can feel intrusive or overwhelming due to the amount of attention you give it, which may affect your ability to focus on conversations.

If you have both tinnitus and hearing loss, it's important to know that your hearing challenges stem from the hearing loss, not the tinnitus.

What factors influence the disruptive nature of tinnitus?

Certain things can make your tinnitus more disruptive, including:

- fatigue;
- stress;
- mood;
- pain;
- muscle tension;
- negative thoughts or fears (e.g., "Will I go deaf?" or "Am I losing my mind?");
- a quiet environment (which can make tinnitus more noticeable).

Ways to manage tinnitus and reduce discomfort

Although there is currently no scientifically proven way to eliminate tinnitus (except in rare cases), certain strategies may help:

- Learning about tinnitus;
- Recognizing it as a neutral, harmless sound;
- Minimizing attention to it;
- Managing fatigue and stress by:
 - Resting;
 - Addressing stressful situations;
 - Practising meditation, relaxation, or breathing exercises;
- Surrounding yourself with pleasant sounds that create positive or neutral emotions to reduce the contrast with silence.



Helpful resources

- **Acouphènes Québec**
acouphenesquebec.org
- **Ordre des orthophonistes et audiologistes du Québec (OOAQ)**
ooaq.qc.ca
- **Mieux vivre avec l'acouphène et l'hyperacousie**
ciusss-capitalnationale.gouv.qc.ca/services/deficience-handicap/deficience-auditive/acouphenes-hyperacousie#mieuxvivre

Advice for people with hearing loss and tinnitus

Hearing aids amplify external sounds, which can help mask tinnitus for many people. Remember, it's normal to have moments when tinnitus is more disruptive, but with support, it is possible to live well with it.

Seeking help for tinnitus?

To find an audiologist in your area, visit the [OOAQ](http://ooaq.qc.ca) website or inquire at your local hospital.