



YOUR GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING TINNITUS

How to manage ringing in your ears



Did you know that tinnitus is related to age? As we get older, the prevalence of tinnitus increases!

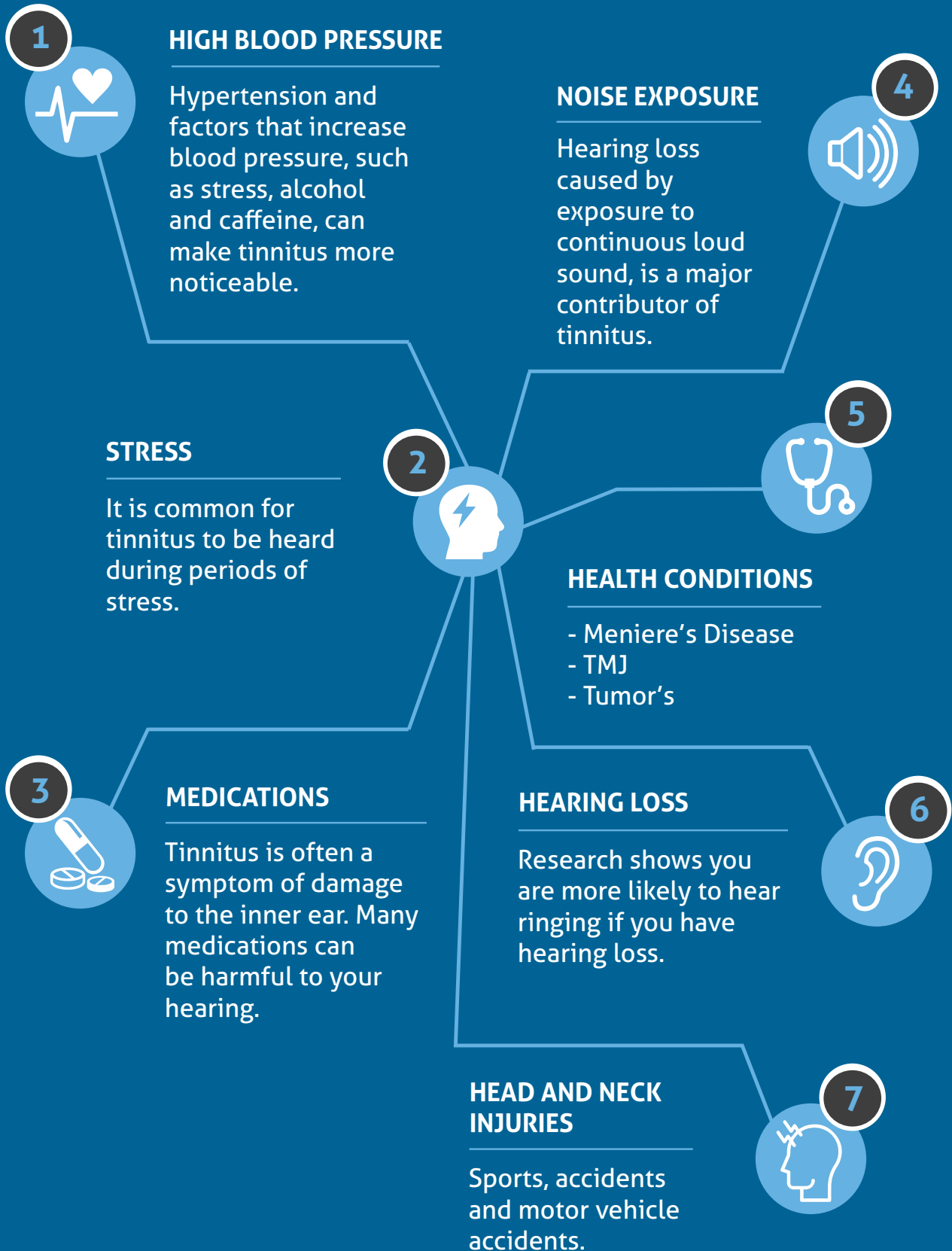
WHAT IS TINNITUS?

“Tinnitus,” or ringing in the ears, refers to the annoying sensation of hearing sounds when there is no external sound present. It can be present in one or both ears, either some or all of the time. It can range from being unbearably loud to very soft. It is often more noticeable in quiet situations, or at night when you’re trying to relax or sleep. Tinnitus can be mild or very bothersome.

Tinnitus is a condition that affects about 10% to 15% of the overall population. One in five people between 55 and 65 years of age report some tinnitus symptoms. It can take on many forms, such as buzzing, hissing, ringing, roaring, or clicking. It’s not a medical condition; tinnitus is a symptom, and most commonly accompanied by some degree of hearing loss. Even if you aren’t experiencing communication difficulties, you may have a hearing loss you are unaware of. Even a mild hearing loss can cause tinnitus.

The annoyance of tinnitus can affect a person’s work and social life, and in severe cases it can cause headaches, tiredness, insomnia, anxiety, irritability and depression.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CAUSES OF TINNITUS?



SOUNDS OF TINNITUS

So what is it that creates that perception of sound when there is none present? Sound waves travel through the ear canal to the middle and inner ear.

Hair cells in the inner ear help transform the sound waves into electrical signals which then travel to the brain. The brain translates the signals into meaningful information so you can interpret the sounds you hear. When hair cells get damaged, the brain doesn't receive the accurate signals it needs. As seen on the previous page, there can be different causes to why your hair cells get damaged and subsequently lead to tinnitus. Sometimes, the cause is not related to inner hair cells.

Experts suspect that, in many cases, tinnitus relates to the brain trying to adapt to a loss of hair cells. The brain misinterprets the reduced signals from the ear, resulting in a perception of sound, or tinnitus.

How you think about your tinnitus can influence your emotional reactions. The brain may interpret the sound of tinnitus as something harmful to your well-being. When you respond to tinnitus as a threat, you become stressed and anxious. The stress and anxiety you feel can make the sound of tinnitus seem even more bothersome. This is an understandable and human reaction.

HOW IS TINNITUS AFFECTING YOUR LIFE?

Whatever its cause, tinnitus can often have a significant impact on day-to-day activities. Some have taught themselves to ignore it. For others, tinnitus symptoms can worsen to the point that getting a full night's sleep is barely possible.

In turn, a bad night's sleep affects you negatively the next day and a vicious cycle may start. Seeking help with your tinnitus when the symptoms occur is important for your overall health. Although your tinnitus may not go away entirely, small changes in your life can make life with tinnitus more manageable.

On the next pages, we will present some of the possible options for treating tinnitus.



TREATING TINNITUS

Addressing and lowering stress levels

Relaxation and mindfulness Yoga and meditation have proven to be particularly effective tools of relief. A healthy diet and exercising can have a positive impact on your life.

Wear hearing protection when you find yourself in loud environments or in close proximity to other noise producing devices such as power tools or lawn mowers. Sound generator is a stand-alone device for your bedside that can play various sounds to reduce tinnitus. Think positively. Negative or angry feelings can make tinnitus seem worse. Focus on the things and sounds that make you happy. Maintain good sleep practices. Try to keep a regular bedtime routine and avoid big meals, alcohol, caffeine, and exercise before sleeping.

DO ANY OF THESE APPLY TO YOU?

- ☐ Because of your tinnitus, is it difficult for you to concentrate?
- ☐ Because of your tinnitus, do you have trouble falling asleep at night?
- ☐ Because of your tinnitus, do you feel frustrated?
- ☐ Does your tinnitus make it difficult to enjoy life?
- ☐ Do you feel as though you cannot escape from your tinnitus?

If you answered **YES** to any of these, contact a medical professional or an Hearing Care Professional.





CAN HEARING AIDS HELP?

To answer that question it helps to understand why you hear tinnitus in the first place! While the exact cause of tinnitus is unclear, researchers know you are more likely to hear ringing if you have hearing loss. The hearing loss in the ear will prevent the brain from receiving the proper stimulation it needs. As a result, the brain starts to produce its own phantom sounds.

An interesting fact—the pitch of your tinnitus is usually the same pitch where there is the most hearing loss. If you have a high-frequency hearing loss, it is likely you will hear a high pitched ringing sound.

It's important to note that hearing aids are not a cure for tinnitus, but they can help. Once you are fit with hearing aids your brain will start to receive stimulation at the pitches you had hearing loss. Overtime, and with consistent hearing aid use, the perception of the tinnitus can be reduced.