**About tinnitus**

Tinnitus affects over 10% of the adult UK population, affecting genders equally, and for each person the effects of the symptoms and impact are different.

The aim of this booklet is to provide information for a person with bothersome tinnitus.

**What is tinnitus?**

Tinnitus is a conscious awareness of a sound in the ears or head that is not due to an external noise. Tinnitus usually arises as a result of the abnormal firing of nerve cells in the area of the brain which processes sound (neural synchrony).

Tinnitus can affect one or both ears and be of a different nature, sound and intensity in either ear.

**Is all tinnitus the same?**

No - every person with tinnitus has their own very personal tinnitus sound. It can be a high or low frequency tone, several sounds together, and its volume can vary over time.

**What are the facts about tinnitus?**

* Although tinnitus affects 10 – 15% of the adult population, it is rarely caused by a serious illness
* Tinnitus can sometimes resolve itself within the first three months or so
* Although there is no cure for tinnitus, there are interventions available which can make a real positive difference.
* A person's awareness of tinnitus is often affected by anxiety or frustration so stress management can improve tinnitus

**What you can do to help your tinnitus?**

* Access self-help information on tinnitus from a reliable source, such as:-
  + The British Tinnitus Association - [www.tinnitus.org.uk/](http://www.tinnitus.org.uk/) or call **0800 018 0527**
  + Action on Hearing Loss - [www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/) or call **0808 808 0123**
* Read the information and understand what is happening within the hearing part of your brain
* Take regular exercise
* Have a balanced healthy diet
* Sleep management – soft music, avoid stimulants before bed time
* Tell friends, colleagues and family so that there is understanding at home and work
* Do not listen out for the noises. This can reduce the chance of your brain accepting the noises

**Ear protection considerations**

Hearing damage as a result of noise exposure can cause a noticeable increase of tinnitus symptoms. Therefore, it is imperative that ear defence is utilised in dangerously loud environments.

Ear protection is made for an individual using an impression of the ear and can incorporate a variety of different filter types. These provide appropriate protection in a multitude of different sound environments. Speech and music will sound clear, but hearing will not be damaged by intensity or loudness if the ear protection is used as advised.

**Relaxation exercises for people with tinnitus**

These are the basic principles of relaxation which may be of help to you.

* Find a comfortable position, and breathe in slowly and clench your fist.
* Feel the tension in your hand and wrist. Now breathe out, and as you do so relax your hand and feel the difference.
* Extend this to other parts of your body, such as your other hand, each arm, leg and foot, your back and neck, face movements, and jaw clenching.
* Breathe slowly and deeply, hold your breath a moment, relax then let it out, wait a moment, then breathe slowly and deeply again, and so on.

Once you have learned these breathing and muscle relaxation exercises, use them regularly, wherever and whenever you can find the time and space. It will take practice, but the benefits will be felt over time.

Some people find that aromatherapy, improved posture, massage, reflexology, craniofacial therapy, yoga, and tai chi have similar relaxing benefits, as can simply resting in a relaxing environment, perhaps with special aromas, dim lights, and soft music.

**Sound therapy**

Many people benefit from sound therapy which can be easily and simply applied at home by playing natural sounds which may be helpful in reducing the contrast between the level of your tinnitus and the level of background sound. In turn, this reduces the intrusiveness of the tinnitus and the tension it causes by encouraging relaxation and self-management to control the tinnitus symptoms (noise).

**Help with Sleeping**

Sleeping can very often be the most difficult thing to achieve when tinnitus first appears. The aim of the simple rules which follow is to establish a routine which resets your ability to sleep.

**Early evening**

* Spend 15 – 20 minutes each evening, writing down any worries and considering how to resolve them
* Limit the amount of caffeine (tea, coffee, cola, etc.) alcohol and nicotine taken
* Keep active during the day but avoid exercise for up to two hours before bedtime
* Try to avoid stressful or exciting television, books or films
* Make sure the bedroom is calm and tidy, and is neither too hot nor too cold
* Prepare any sound therapy

**One hour before bedtime**

* Turn off phone and computer
* Do simple relaxation exercises for 20 minutes
* Do not have anything further to eat
* Take a warm bath or relaxing shower

**Bedtime**

* Do not read, watch TV or use your smart phone in the bedroom
* Put the light out immediately after going to bed
* Wear loose fitting night clothes

**Morning**

* Get up at the same time every morning, regardless of how poor the previous night’s sleep has been
* Do not nap or take recovery sleep the following day
* Establish a routine and estimate how much sleep is achieved. It is useful to estimate how much sleep is actually achieved and then spend only that amount of time in bed

Tinnitus affects every person differently and therefore management can be challenging. What one person finds non-bothersome, another person will find intolerable. Find the ways that work for you and help you to adapt to tinnitus.