



## **Tinnitus**

This leaflet is targeted at young people in Key Stage 2

### **What is tinnitus?**

Tinnitus is when your brain hears a sound inside your head or ears that doesn't have a matching sound outside. Some people hear buzzing or ringing, others might hear whooshing or humming. A few even hear musical sounds!

Tinnitus is very common. If you ask other children in your class, you may be surprised how many hear noises in their ears at times. Most people aren't bothered by it but some find it quite upsetting. If you are finding it annoying there are lots of things you can do to make it better.

### **Am I going deaf?**

It is important to get your ears checked if you think you have a problem with your hearing or have noticed tinnitus. Your ears could be blocked if you have a cold or a lot of ear wax.

If you already wear a hearing aid, you might be aware of tinnitus when you aren't wearing it, as the brain doesn't have any outside noises to listen to.

### **Will I get better?**

In most cases tinnitus gets better and even goes away. This is because the brain forgets it's listening to the sound.

It's called 'habituation'.

### **Is there a cure?**

Because tinnitus isn't a disease, there isn't a 'cure' for it but there are loads of things you can do to make it better. If we listen out for tinnitus our brains will think it is important and will keep listening to it.

Our bodies make lots of noises our brain usually doesn't listen to like chewing, or rumbling tummies. When it gets used to the tinnitus the brain stops listening to that, too.

It can help to give your brain more interesting noises to listen to, such as quiet music or the radio.

### **Will I need an operation?**

There aren't any operations for tinnitus, though sometimes operations can treat things that cause tinnitus.



### **What can I do about it?**

Everyone is different. Once you've worked out how tinnitus affects you, and what makes it quieter, you can start to make up ways to make it better.

You might notice it's quieter when there is background noise, or the complete opposite, it is better when you are in silence.

Often it's very simple things like moving away from noisy people in class or having a fan or a radio nearby that makes a small, constant sound to soothe your brain.

Tinnitus can seem worse when you're worried about something. You can learn how to relax so your brain calms down. Talking with other people about what your tinnitus is like and how it affects you can help too.

### **Should I wear a hearing aid?**

If you have a long term hearing loss, a hearing aid can help you hear sounds around you better, and your brain will be able to ignore the tinnitus sounds better.

### **Is there anything that will help make my tinnitus quieter?**

Sometimes playing some quiet music or having another sound, like a fan or the radio in the background will help. You can also download other sounds, such as waves on a beach, that may help relax your brain.

### **Sometimes my tinnitus won't let me sleep**

There are lots of things you can try. Learning how to relax and calm your mind can help. Try doing something quiet before you go to bed, perhaps reading a book, so that your brain gets ready to sleep.

Watching TV or playing computer games just before bedtime makes your brain excited, so that it's not relaxed when you want to go to sleep.

### **Sometimes I can't hear my teacher in class.**

Other people can't hear your tinnitus so they will not know you have it unless you tell them. If it is a problem in class, do talk to your teacher. That way if you can feel it coming on, your teacher can take extra care to make sure you hear everything. If it gets very annoying, sometimes being allowed to have a break can also be helpful.



### **Sometimes my tinnitus makes me feel sad or upset**

While most children are not really bothered by their tinnitus, some people can find it annoying at times. If it does make you feel upset, there are lots of things that can help, such as learning to relax properly and talking to other people about how you feel.

The most important thing is to keep healthy and enjoy your life.

When you're having good times with hobbies, sports and fun things your brain is less interested by the sounds tinnitus makes and just ignores them.

There are lots of things to try when you need help, such as relaxation and using sound. It's important to remember that most people's tinnitus goes away by itself and you don't need to do anything.