



Tinnitus causes

Most commonly, tinnitus is caused by damage to the inner ear. This damage can occur from a number of sources, such as exposure to very loud sounds throughout your life or toxic medications that damage the ear. Tinnitus can also be caused by something as simple as earwax. In very rare cases, underlying medical conditions can cause tinnitus. Interestingly, research has shown that up to 95 percent of young normal-hearing adults experience tinnitus when placed in the right conditions.

The perception of tinnitus is the result of changes in the auditory system, which leads to an increase in the neuron activity from the inner ear to the brain. This increase in nerve activity is interpreted by the brain as sound. Often, the brain perceives the sound throughout most of the day, or just in quiet situations. Continued awareness of the tinnitus sound can result in emotional disturbance, such as irritation, frustration, or anger.

Tinnitus and stress

Stress and fatigue have also been shown to affect tinnitus. It's important to make time to relax and reduce your stress levels. Work with your audiologist to find a good support network and devise methods to reduce stress and improve relaxation. If tinnitus affects your quality of life by

reducing your sleep, affecting your performance at work, making tasks in your everyday life less enjoyable, or reduces your ability to concentrate, you may benefit from some sort of intervention. If your tinnitus is bothersome, you should seek help.

A number of healthcare professionals specialize in tinnitus treatment and can help if you have symptoms. The first step is to see an audiologist who can visually inspect your ears and evaluate your hearing. Tinnitus is most often related to inner ear damage. In these cases, an audiologist is the most skilled and appropriate professional to evaluate and treat the problem. If your tinnitus is potentially caused by an underlying medical condition, we can make the appropriate referral to a physician.

Tinnitus treatment

Today, many effective treatment options are available for tinnitus. Because tinnitus is so individual, you should work with your audiologist or physician to determine the best management option for you.

At Helmert Hearing Clinic we ask that you undergo a diagnostic hearing evaluation, We will perform a tinnitus assessment to determine the pitch and loudness of your tinnitus, as well as evaluate your minimum masking level.

In addition to completing your new patient forms (see Registration Forms), when you come in for your tinnitus evaluation, be sure to bring a comprehensive list of your medications and dosages with you. **Important:** Do not discontinue or change your medication without first consulting your prescribing physician.

Sound therapy management options

The primary form of tinnitus management offered by Helmert Hearing Clinic is the use of sound therapy in a structured and supervised program. Sound therapy promotes habituation (desensitization) to tinnitus and sound sensitivity problems.

For many patients, the initiation of sound therapy quickly brings relief from symptoms. With continued use, sound therapy can ultimately reduce the perception of tinnitus and restore normal sound perception. There are many types of sound therapy available for management of tinnitus and sound sensitivity. During your initial consultation, we will discuss these with you and recommend the type most appropriate for your situation.

Hearing aids

When hearing loss is present, the majority of patients experience relief from tinnitus when using hearing aids. The relief experienced through hearing aid use is due to improved communication ability, which can decrease stress and enable patients to be more engaged in their environments, thereby lessening the effect of the tinnitus. Hearing aids also result in increased nerve activity/stimulation, which may help suppress or mask the tinnitus.

Sound Generating Devices

When hearing aids alone do not bring sufficient relief, the use of combination devices may be recommended. These devices provide amplification and incorporate a sound generator. The sound generator plays soothing sounds to reduce the perception of tinnitus and provide relief. Many combination devices are available.

Other sound therapy and management options

Other options for sound therapy may be self-directed and can include devices such as music players, table-top sound generators, and other masking devices. Lifestyle changes will also be discussed and recommended during your consult and follow-up appointments. These may include limiting noise exposure, use of hearing protection, incorporation of stress management and relaxation strategies, and a review of how current diet and medications may be affecting your tinnitus.