



SENIOR HEALTH



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Tinnitus

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Coping skills

Sometimes symptoms of tinnitus improve with time. Improvement isn't the result of physical changes, because any damage that has occurred to your ears is permanent and irreversible. Instead, many people learn to make adjustments to lessen the symptoms.

Try these techniques for reducing the severity of the noise and increasing your tolerance to it:

- **Avoid possible irritants.** Tinnitus may be aggravated by loud noises, nicotine, caffeine, tonic water, which contains quinine (the same substance as the medication used to treat malaria), alcohol and excessive doses of aspirin. Nicotine and caffeine constrict your blood vessels, increasing the speed of blood flow through your veins and arteries. Alcohol increases the force of your blood by dilating your blood vessels, causing greater blood flow, especially in the inner ear area.
- **Cover up the noise.** In a quiet setting, a fan, soft music or low-volume radio static may help mask the noise from tinnitus. For some people, tinnitus maskers — devices similar in appearance to hearing aids that produce a pleasant noise — may help.
- **Wear a hearing aid.** If tinnitus is accompanied by hearing loss, hearing aids can amplify outside sounds, possibly making the tinnitus noise less obvious.
- **Manage stress.** Stress can make tinnitus worse. Stress management, whether through relaxation therapy, biofeedback or exercise, may provide some relief.

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