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TINNITUS

HELPFUL HINTS FOR PATIENTS

Tinnitus is any sound (ringing, buzzing, and puling "cricket noise") that you hear in your head. The cause of tinnitus is unknown. It is often a symptom of hearing loss, but can exist without hearing loss present. It is rarely something serious. Treating tinnitus is difficult because professionals cannot pinpoint its source. However, IT IS NOT HOPELESS. It DOES take patience and cooperation on your part.

1. The first step is to accurately describe your tinnitus. Is it in one ear or both? Is it continuous or intermittent? Can you track its changes "is it worse at different times of the day or month"?
2. The second step in treating tinnitus is to try to note any changes in diet, medication, lifestyle, or stress that may have initiated tinnitus.
3. The third step is to have a hearing test. Any abnormalities that may point to a more serious cause can be established with a thorough audiological evaluation.

With this information, your physician can instruct you on how to reduce your tinnitus. For example, some things in your diet that may make tinnitus worse include **caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, chocolate, ibuprofen (Advil & Motrin), or aspirin products**. You should immediately try to eliminate or reduce these things from your diet. (This is where your cooperation comes into play!!!)

Stress is a big factor in treating tinnitus. The difficulty arises when your tinnitus is the cause of your stress. Find some way to relax yourself-deep breathing, exercise, listening to music. Professional counseling may be necessary in more severe cases.

If **hearing loss** is present and any serious problem has been ruled out, hearing aid may be the answer. Sometimes the amplification of outside sounds will help to cover up the tinnitus. Keep in mind, however, that the primary purpose for hearing aids is to improve communication ability-this may just be an added bonus. The audiologist will discuss this option with you.

Other options are available. Maskers and experimental treatments may be the answer for you. The *American Tinnitus Association* is a good resource for tinnitus sufferers and will have the most up-to-date information on tinnitus treatment. The following is their address, phone number, and e-mail address:

Dept PP. PO Box 5, Portland, OR 97207-0005, (503) 248-9985, tinnitus@ata.org