

This is printed as part of a series of occasional papers produced by
BIRMINGHAM & DISTRICT TINNITUS GROUP
presenting a variety of points to offer information and support for our members

Coping strategies to help you manage your tinnitus

Compiled by Ann Perry

Diagnose & understand your tinnitus

1. DO NOT PANIC. Tinnitus is very rarely a sign of a serious, ongoing medical condition.
2. CHECK things out. The sounds you hear may actually be normal sounds created by the human body at work.
3. SEE an audiologist or ENT (ear, nose and throat) specialist who is interested and experienced in tinnitus treatment.
4. REVIEW your current medications (prescription, over-the-counter, vitamins and other supplements) with your medical professional to find possible effects on your tinnitus.
5. BE WARY of a hopeless diagnosis or physician advice like, "There's nothing you can do about your tinnitus. Go home and live with it." There IS something you can do about it.
6. BE a detective. Keep track of what triggers your tinnitus.
7. KEEP UP TO DATE about tinnitus. More and more research by the best and the brightest is bringing us closer to successful treatments and cures for tinnitus.

Find good treatment & take care of yourself

1. BE KIND to yourself. Developing tinnitus means you have undergone a significant physical, emotional and maybe even life-style change.
2. EXAMINE how you live to find ways to eliminate or reduce some stress in different parts of your life; stress often makes tinnitus worse.
3. PLACE IMPORTANCE on healthy eating and staying active. If you are concerned, one-by-one, try eliminating possible sources of tinnitus aggravation, e.g., alcohol, tobacco, coffee, tea, chocolate, excessive salt and sugar and over-the-counter medications, **but do not stop taking prescription medications without consulting with your doctor.**
4. DON'T GIVE UP on a treatment if it doesn't work right away. Some can take quite a while to have a positive effect.
5. PROTECT YOURSELF from further auditory damage by avoiding loud places and by using earplugs when you can't avoid loud noise.

Your Attitude matters

1. DO NOT create any negative forecasts for your tinnitus, such as "This is never going to get any better." Counting on a better future can help you create one.
2. TAKE HEART. In most cases people with tinnitus "habituate" to it, meaning they get used to it and notice it less than at first.
3. BE INVOLVED in your recovery. Consider yourself part of your treatment team where your thoughts and feelings should count.
4. DO NOT WASTE time blaming yourself for your tinnitus. The causes of tinnitus are varied and sometimes difficult to determine.

Line up support

1. LOCATE people who understand your struggles and learn that you are not alone. Have people in your life who, though they cannot "see" or "hear" your tinnitus, understand that you have it.
2. FIND a support group that will truly understand your struggles with tinnitus and help you sort out useful from useless information. You will find compassion, companionship and coping strategies. (The British Tinnitus Association (BTA) has information on tinnitus support groups and individual, helpful volunteers.)
3. EDUCATE your family, friends and co-workers about tinnitus; tell them about the conditions and

settings that are difficult for you; and ask them for their support. See our group's information leaflet "Help for the Helpers" which could prove useful.

4. CONTINUE SEEKING reliable information from BTA and other creditable sources.

This paper has been adapted from one seen on the American Tinnitus Association's website. We have taken the main sub-headings used in their document and incorporated the experiences of our own group members.

Useful contacts:

Birmingham & District Tinnitus Group

website : www.tinnitusbham.org.uk email : info@tinnitusbham.org.uk

British Tinnitus Association - Freephone 0800 018 0527

website : www.tinnitus.org.uk email : info@tinnitus.org.uk

B&DTG August 08