



You have tinnitus? You think nothing can be done for it? Think again! There are resources that can help.

What is tinnitus?

When you have tinnitus, you hear sounds that don't come from an external source. That means people around you don't hear them. The type of sound varies from person to person. It can be whistling, buzzing, clicking, rattling, squeaking, pulsing, etc.

Tinnitus is a symptom and not a disease — a bit like fever, which is a symptom of infection. With your doctor, you can try to find out what is causing your tinnitus.

How common is this condition?

According to Statistics Canada, 37% of Canadians have experienced an episode of tinnitus.

How does tinnitus occur?

It may occur suddenly or develop gradually. Some people hear it all the time, others only occasionally.

The auditory system is very complex. Sometimes people experience tinnitus only in one ear, sometimes in both. It can even be perceived at different points in the head.

Is tinnitus related to deafness?

Not necessarily. But in some cases tinnitus might be accompanied by:

- hearing loss
- reduced tolerance for sounds in your environment

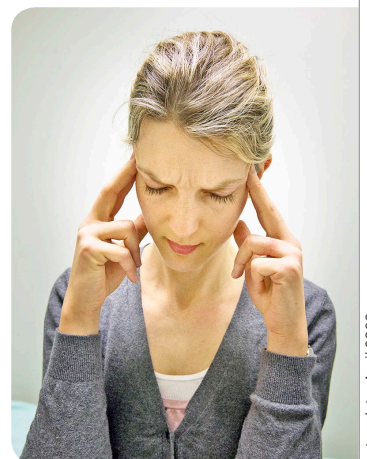
What are the potential effects of tinnitus?

The effects of tinnitus on everyday life vary greatly from person to person.

Some people experience only minor inconveniences, while for others it has a major impact. Possible effects include:

- problems sleeping or concentrating
- irritability or sadness
- difficulty communicating with family and friends

Nearly 1 in 10 people with tinnitus find the situation very disturbing. Some people go out less and tend to isolate themselves.





DID YOU KNOW?

A stronger tinnitus is not necessarily more disturbing.

Contrary to what one might think, the discomfort caused by tinnitus is not related to the strength of the sound, nor to its high or low pitch.

What can cause or change my tinnitus?

Hundreds of factors can cause tinnitus or “modify” it, that is, change the shape of the sound, its strength, etc. In dealing with your tinnitus, it can be very helpful to you to know what these are.

Examples include:

- exposure to loud noises
- ear disorder (such as Meniere’s disease, otosclerosis)
- damage to the auditory nerve
- heavy blow to the head or neck
- fatigue and stress
- depression
- problem with a joint at the jaw or neck
- diabetes
- common cold, seasonal allergies, sinusitis, etc.
- consuming certain items, such as salty foods, energy drinks, alcohol, and cigarettes
- certain medicines and drugs



What can I do to keep my tinnitus from getting worse?

- Avoid exposure to loud noises, or limit them as much as possible.
- Use various ways to better manage your stress (relaxation, exercise, meditation, etc.).

What approaches could help me manage my tinnitus better?

Here are some strategies you could try:

- > Sound therapy: listening to different sounds or noises using various tools or equipment (music, white noise, fan, etc.).
- > Cognitive-behavioural therapy: this is a psychological approach to help change negative beliefs or thoughts, such as the fear that your tinnitus will become worse or cause deafness.
- > Compensatory strategies: tricks to improve your sleep and concentration, for example.
- > Relaxation and stress management techniques: such as listening to a relaxation CD or doing yoga practices.
- > Complementary therapies: for example, acupuncture or osteopathy are sometimes beneficial.
- > Experimental therapies: new therapies that are being developed.



If you are taking medications, ask your doctor or pharmacist to check whether they can have an impact on your tinnitus.

Caution: Never stop taking any medication without first consulting your doctor.

Are there any treatments?

This is a frequent question. Tinnitus can sometimes be reduced or eliminated:

- if the cause is treated; that is, if a cause can be identified and is treatable
- if the tinnitus is caused or aggravated by a medicine that can be changed

However, even if your tinnitus doesn't go away, it is possible to manage it better or control its effects.



What good would it do for me to see an audiologist?

An audiologist is a health professional who evaluates and treats problems of the auditory system (hearing loss, tinnitus, etc.) and the vestibular system (vertigo, balance disorder, etc.). If you consult for your tinnitus, the audiologist can:

- > give you more information about tinnitus
- > evaluate the impact of tinnitus on your life and do various tests, if necessary
- > suggest some strategies for coping with it
- > help you develop a personalized plan for some steps you could take, and help you follow it
- > if necessary, refer you to other health professionals

Who can I contact for help or to ask questions?

For more information on audiology services at the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal (CHUM), you can contact the Audiology-Speech-Language Pathology Department. Business hours are from 8:30 a. m. to 4:00 p. m.

> **514 890-8236**



USEFUL RESOURCES

Audiology-Speech-Language Pathology Department, CHUM (French only):

> **chumontreal.qc.ca**

In the top right corner of the page, click on "Répertoire", then under "Cliniques" select "Audiologie"

Acouphènes Québec:

> **514 276-7772**

> **1 877 276-7772** (toll-free)

> **acouphenesquebec.org** (French only)

Other health sheets published by the CHUM are available. Ask for those that might fit your situation.



You can also find them on our web site

chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante

The content of this document in no way replaces the recommendations and diagnoses made, or the treatment suggested by your health professional.

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal
chumontreal.qc.ca



Questions

Write down any questions you want to ask your care team so you don't forget anything.



Lined area for writing questions



Observations - Comments

Write down observations you feel are important: your symptoms, treatments, follow-up, energy level, spirit, etc.



Lined area for writing observations and comments



Upcoming appointments

Lined area for writing upcoming appointments

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