

Fact Sheet 18/01

Understanding and Managing your Tinnitus

What is Tinnitus?

Tinnitus is a hearing condition where people hear noises, hisses or hums that have no external source and is often called 'ringing in the ears'. It can be constant or occasional, loud or soft, mild or severe and can be heard in one or both ears or "in the head".

Understanding your Tinnitus

People develop tinnitus because there is damage in their auditory system. It may start because of damage to the inner ear, but it is actually generated by the brain.

A damaged inner ear deprived of sound can send messages to the brain when there is not sound present in the real world. These messages are saved in the emotional centre of the brain and can lead to stress and anxiety.

Tinnitus is not a disease but a symptom of other hearing conditions. There are many causes but exposure to loud industrial noise or loud music is the most common one.

Managing your Tinnitus

There is no medical or surgical solution for tinnitus, but there are successful strategies to help you manage it. The first step is to seek information about what it is, how it develops and what can be done.

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy can help people learn to manage the negative thoughts associated with tinnitus and reduce the stress and anxiety.

Hearing aids can provide benefits, even if you don't have a communication problem because they provide more access to real world sounds which are easier to accept than the tinnitus in your head. This is called sound enrichment.

Listening to an artificially generated sound like music or wind chimes will help the brain adjust or "habituate" to the tinnitus. This is called sounds stimulation.

Finally, relaxation strategies like meditation or mindfulness are very important to help you learn to adjust and accept the tinnitus.

**For more information contact Better Hearing Australia (VIC) – www.betterhearing.org.au
or an accredited Audiologist**