

Tinnitus: assessment and management

Information for the public

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Tinnitus: the care you should expect

Tinnitus is when you can hear noises that seem to come from inside your head. It is sometimes described as a ringing, hissing or buzzing noise, but the exact sound and how loud it is varies from person to person. Tinnitus is common and affects more than 1 in 10 adults. For some people it becomes severe or long lasting, which can disrupt daily life and cause a lot of distress. Tinnitus can be caused by a number of things but is not usually a sign of something serious. Most people learn to manage it well, as long as they get the right advice and support.

We want this guideline to make a difference to people with tinnitus by making sure:

- when people seek help for tinnitus it is always taken seriously
- more support is offered to people to cope with the distress caused by tinnitus
- the right tests are offered to explore any possible cause of tinnitus
- doctors know when to refer someone with tinnitus, and how quickly, to rule out other conditions.

Making decisions together

Decisions about treatment and care are best when they are made together. Your healthcare professionals should give you clear information, talk with you about your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns. They should also:

- discuss how tinnitus affects you and reassure you that there are ways to help
- help you to understand your tinnitus and how to manage it in your daily life
- discuss fully with you the different tests and any possible treatments for tinnitus.

If you can't understand the information you are given, tell your health professional.

Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

Where can I find out more?

The [NHS website](#) has more information about tinnitus.

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [Action on Hearing Loss](#), 0800 808 0123
- [British Tinnitus Association](#), 0800 018 0527

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

To share an experience of care you have received, contact your local [Healthwatch](#).

We wrote this guideline with people who have been affected by tinnitus and staff who treat and support them. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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