

Healthy Hearing FOCUS

An informational Newsletter from Colorado Hearing Specialists
and Ear, Nose and Throat of Parker.



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Tinnitus: When Quiet is No Longer Silent

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Tinnitus is the perception of sounds heard in one or both ears or within your head that are not present in the environment. Tinnitus varies greatly between individuals with descriptions including ringing, buzzing, hissing, clicking, chirping, ocean waves, or cicadas. It can be intermittent or constant, high or low pitched, steady or pulsing, a single sound or multiple sounds together. Tinnitus can also vary greatly in both loudness as well as annoyance between patients.

Due to the invisible nature of tinnitus, family and friends often cannot relate to the annoyance and difficulties that can be associated with tinnitus. Sound files demonstrating the various ways that tinnitus is perceived can be found at www.neuromonics.com under the "About Tinnitus" section. Not a disease or disorder itself, tinnitus is a symptom of other conditions. The causes of tinnitus are numerous and often difficult to precisely determine in many patients. Most commonly, tinnitus is a result of the onset of high frequency hearing loss, often so mild that it may not yet be perceived by the patient.

It is quite common to experience tinnitus for brief periods of time following exposure to loud noise including concerts, sporting events, using power tools, attending races, etc. In this case, tinnitus is a symptom of a temporary shift in your hearing induced by that loud noise. Medical ear concerns including ear infections, excessive ear wax near the ear drum, Meniere's disease, Eustachian tube dysfunction, and otosclerosis can result in the development of tinnitus. Many other conditions not directly related to your ears have also been correlated with tinnitus as well including hypothyroidism, hyperthyroidism, jaw misalignment (TMJ), cardiovascular disease, benign tumors, head trauma, Lyme disease, migraine headaches, strokes, and fibromyalgia. Tinnitus can also be a side effect of over 200 prescriptive medications and chemotherapy drugs, as well as excessive caffeine intake.

Due to the multitude of causes, management of tinnitus differs depending on the underlying cause. For the majority of our patients, tinnitus is associated with the onset of a permanent sensori-neural hearing loss related to structural changes within the sense organ of hearing, the cochlea. This damage and the associated tinnitus are irreversible, however, that does not mean that the tinnitus symptoms are untreatable. If other medical concerns can be identified, treatment of the underlying condition may result in tinnitus improvement. A thorough audiological assessment and case history with your Audiologist is the first step to determining proper management for your tinnitus. To learn more, call (720) 842-1890 to schedule an appointment for complimentary tinnitus evaluation.



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