However, drugs also can make tinnitus louder. Any use of drugs for tinnitus involves trial-and-error. Because of possible side effects, the use of drugs should be approached with caution.

Does my tinnitus make it harder for me to hear?

Many people have hearing problems along with tinnitus. Some people think that the tinnitus causes their hearing problems - which is not true (*hearing loss* is the cause of hearing problems). If you have tinnitus or hearing problems, you should have a hearing test.

What should I do about my tinnitus?

Start by getting a hearing test (and hearing aids if needed). Hearing aids can help with a hearing problem by amplifying sounds. Amplifying sounds can also help with tinnitus. Most people say that they notice their tinnitus less when they are wearing hearing aids.

What if I need more help?

If you need more help, find an audiologist who has experience working with people who have tinnitus. The VA provides an approach for helping Veterans manage their tinnitus. It is called Progressive Tinnitus Management (PTM). PTM is also used outside of the VA. PTM teaches ways to use sound to manage reactions to tinnitus. PTM also teaches how to change your thoughts and feelings to cope with tinnitus. The method is "progressive" because different people require different levels of services.

PTM materials have been developed by the VA to teach you ways to help manage your tinnitus. A step-by-step workbook is available that explains how to manage your reactions to tinnitus. This information is also available on a DVD and a CD.

PTM

Progressive Tinnitus Management

For more information:

Contact your VA audiologist.

Use the internet: go to http://www.ncrar.research.va.gov/

TINNITUS

Questions & Answers

VA RR&D

NCRAR

Veterans Health Administration Employee Education System

VA HEALTH CARE Defining EXCELLENCE in the 21st Century

What is tinnitus?

Tinnitus is humming, ringing, buzzing, or other sounds in the ears or head.

How do you pronounce "tinnitus"?

"ti-**night**-us" or "**tin**-uh-tus" - either is correct.

What causes tinnitus?

The most common cause of tinnitus is exposure to loud noise. Tinnitus can also be caused by head injury, medications, ear wax - and many other causes. For many people it is impossible to know the exact cause of tinnitus.

Is there a cure for tinnitus?

A "cure" would be some way to make the tinnitus sound stop. Right now, there is no safe and consistent way to quiet tinnitus. However, there are many ways to feel better without making tinnitus quieter.

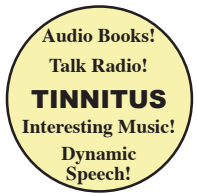
How can I feel better without making my tinnitus quieter?

You can feel better by learning how to change your reactions to tinnitus - or by learning to **manage** your reactions to tinnitus. It is also important to exercise and eat right.

How can I manage my reactions to tinnitus?

First, *sound* can be used in many different ways to manage reactions to tinnitus. *Soothing sound* can help you feel better without making the tinnitus quieter. *Interesting or entertaining sounds* can help you get your mind off of your tinnitus. *Background sounds* make it easier for your tinnitus to be ignored. You can learn to develop your own custom plan for using sound to help you any time tinnitus is a problem.

Soothing sound



Interesting sound

Background sound

Second, there are methods to help you relax. Many people say stress makes their tinnitus seem louder. You can learn relaxation exercises that will help you feel better. **Third**, you can plan pleasant activities even when your tinnitus is bothering you. Pleasant activities can help you enjoy life and help you get your mind off of your tinnitus. **Fourth**, what you think affects how you feel. You can change the way you think about your tinnitus from "there's no hope for my tinnitus" to thoughts like "I'm learning about new ways to feel better without making my tinnitus quieter." With practice, changing your thoughts and attitudes can help you feel better. Ask your audiologist where to get help coming up with new ways to think about your tinnitus.

Can drugs help?

All drugs used for tinnitus were actually developed for other problems - like depression, anxiety, and trouble sleeping. Some of these drugs can improve your mood. A better mood can help to make tinnitus less of a problem. In rare cases, a certain drug may also reduce the loudness of tinnitus.