

Tinnitus Management and Hearing Therapy Services

Patient information

This information is for people who have tinnitus (noises in the ears). In it, you will find information about the management of tinnitus, including services available at St Georges University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

When you spoke to your doctor about tinnitus, you may have been referred to the audiology or the ear-nose and throat (ENT) department. You would most likely have had the opportunity to talk a bit about your tinnitus and why it's troublesome for you, and you may have had a few tests done, including a hearing test.

Having had your investigations, you may be encouraged to try some strategies to help you with your tinnitus. These are often very useful and a good way to help you reduce the impact of tinnitus in your everyday life.

This leaflet will provide you with an overview of these strategies with some additional leaflets included in this pack to give you some more detail on each management option.

What is Hearing Therapy?

Hearing Therapy is part of the greater audiology department. People get referred to hearing therapy for help with a range of problems, including adjusting to having hearing loss, maximising hearing, tinnitus (noises in the ears or head) and hyperacusis (oversensitivity to sound).

What does therapy involve?

The hearing therapist's role is to support you while you try to find a way of coping with your difficulties. This may involve some strategies, but it may also involve a counseling-based approach, where you are offered support to try to adjust to a long-term condition.

The overall aim of hearing therapy is to help you to cope better, not to find a cure.

How many times do I need to see someone?

An important part of the process is your assessment. This will happen first. You may be asked to fill in some questionnaires and then to discuss your difficulties in detail with the therapist. The main focus of the assessment is to get an understanding of how you are currently managing and what your needs are.

Once your assessment is completed, you will spend some time setting goals for therapy and deciding how you can work together with the therapist to achieve your goals. You are encouraged to participate fully in this so it helps to consider your goals before this session.

Having decided on a management plan, you will meet fairly regularly with your therapist to work towards your goals. The number of sessions and how far apart they are depends very much on each individual's situation. Typically, you can expect anything from 3 to 10 sessions. The maximum number of sessions is 10.

Tinnitus Management Options

At St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, we are able to offer a range of tinnitus management options. Your therapist will discuss these with you in more detail, but some may not be suitable for you. If there is anything you want to know about, please make a note and bring this to your therapy appointment.

Generally speaking, the tinnitus management options are designed to help you live better with your tinnitus. There is no cure for tinnitus, so our focus is trying to improve your quality of life. You might want to have a look at the British Tinnitus Association's e-learning module, 'Take On Tinnitus', which offers a good overview of living better with tinnitus. You can find this by visiting:

<https://www.tinnitus.org.uk/takeontinnitus>

Sound Therapy

Some people find that having some other sound on is a good way of reducing the impact of the tinnitus. There are a number of devices that can be purchased to produce sound. For more details, please contact the British Tinnitus Association (www.tinnitus.org.uk) or Action on Hearing Loss (www.actionhearingloss.org.uk). Alternatively, you may find some apps for smartphones are helpful.

Some people who have tinnitus also have a hearing loss and, in such cases, hearing aids may be an option.

Relaxation

A lot of people report that stress is something that seems to make tinnitus more noticeable. Relaxation seems to help this in a number of people and there are a number of things you can do to feel more relaxed, and then (hopefully) reduce how problematic the tinnitus seems. We can direct you to some self-led resources, or you may be invited to attend our 4 week relaxation course for people with tinnitus.

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) is used in many chronic health conditions because it is an individualised approach to understanding how you make sense of your condition, and how this informs your decision-making about what you do to live with your condition. CBT can be a very useful way to figure out what strategies you are using that may be helpful, and what you might be doing that is unhelpful. If something you are doing is unhelpful, certain techniques are used to try to find alternative ways of doing things.

Here at St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, we offer one-to-one CBT sessions if this is appropriate for you. Your therapist will talk to you about this in more detail.

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy

Mindfulness meditation has been shown to be very helpful for managing long term conditions. The essence of mindfulness is that you learn to approach your condition in a different way – instead of resisting this unpleasant sound, you learn to stop fighting and so become less affected by it. If mindfulness is something that may be appropriate for you, you will be invited to attend our 8 week Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) course.

Talking about tinnitus

It can be really useful to talk about your tinnitus. Sometimes having someone to listen to what you are going through can make all the difference in feeling better. The British Tinnitus Association run a free tinnitus helpline, which you can call. The telephone number is 0800 018 0527.

How to get an appointment

You can be referred by your ear, nose and throat (ENT) consultant, audiovestibular physician or audiologist. You can also be referred by your GP as long as you have recently seen an ENT consultant or audiovestibular physician.

Once you are referred, your letter is read by the hearing therapy team and passed on to the central booking service, who will send you an appointment. Please note there is a waiting list for an appointment.

If you decide that hearing therapy is not for you, please cancel your appointment. Please note that if you do decide not to proceed with hearing therapy, this does not affect any appointments you may have with audiology and/or your consultant.

If you have any questions about the information in this leaflet, you can contact:

Department of Audiology & Audiological Medicine

Ground floor

Lanesborough Wing

St George's Hospital

Blackshaw Road

Tooting

SW17 0QT

Telephone: 020 8725 1151 (enquiries)

e-mail: stgh-tr.hearingtherapy@nhs.net

Note: this form is under review and is subject to change following recommendations from the Patient Information Group