



# 5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT... TINNITUS

*Tinnitus is when you hear noises, such as ringing or buzzing, which are not caused by sounds from the outside world. Mr Nitesh Patel, consultant ear, nose and throat surgeon, explains five important facts about tinnitus*

**1 Tinnitus is a symptom and not a disease.**  
Tinnitus is not normally a sign of anything serious. The sounds that do not come from an outside source are often described as ringing, whooshing, humming, or buzzing. They can also be rhythmic or even musical. You may hear these sounds in one ear, both ears, or the head.

**2 Many people experience tinnitus.**  
People of all ages, including children, can experience tinnitus. Up to 30 per cent of people (that is, one in three) have tinnitus at some point in their life. Although tinnitus is usually more common in older people with hearing loss, younger people increasingly experience tinnitus.

During the coronavirus pandemic, there has been a big increase in tinnitus cases. These cases may be triggered by stress and poor-quality sleep.

**3 Most cases of tinnitus are caused by nerve signals in the brain.**  
If you develop tinnitus without an active condition that affects your hearing, it is called primary tinnitus. This type of tinnitus is caused by electrical signals in the brain. Any stressful experiences as a result of a physical illness, injury, or emotional upset can make your brain overactive and trigger tinnitus.

Secondary tinnitus is much less common. This occurs with an active or acute ear disorder, such as an ear infection, ear

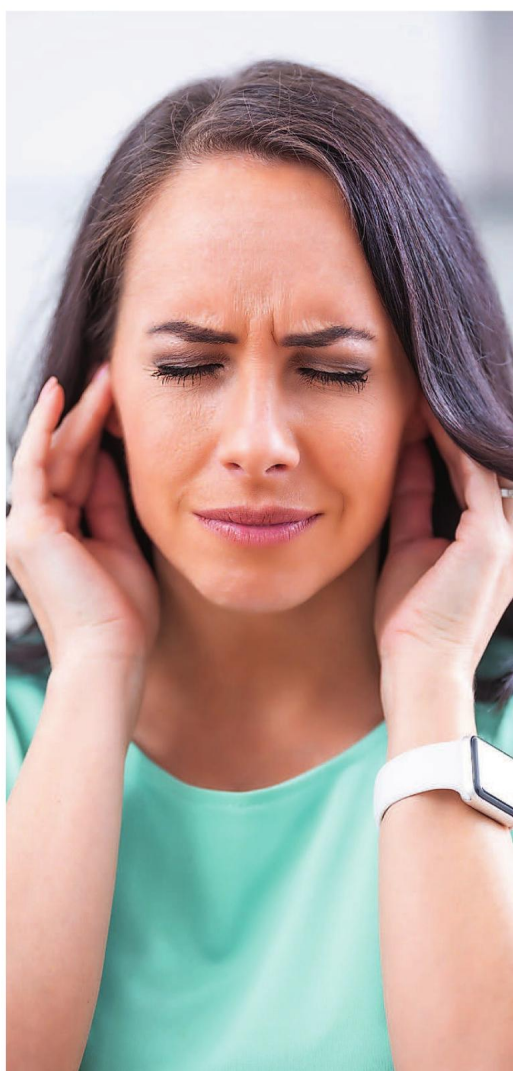


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**4 There are ways to cope with the emotional impact of tinnitus.**

Tinnitus is usually worse when you focus your attention on the sound or are stressed. Learning to focus attention away from the sound can reduce the emotional impact of tinnitus. Other ways of coping are improving the quality of your sleep and practising relaxation techniques.

**5 There are treatment options for tinnitus.**

Secondary tinnitus linked to an active ear disorder often improves after you have treatment for that ear disorder. This may involve:

- Removing wax that blocks the ear canal (the passage to the eardrum)
- Treating an ear infection
- Having surgery for a treatable cause of hearing loss
- Primary tinnitus is not harmful, but persistent ringing in the ears can affect your quality of life. There are various hearing (audiological) and psychological treatments to help reduce and control the brain nerve signals that cause tinnitus. ■

**If you have tinnitus regularly and this disrupts your daily life, our specialist team at The Holly Private Hospital can give you expert advice**

**Mr Nitesh Patel has regular clinics at The Holly House Private Hospital. To book an appointment, call 020 3504 8481**

injury, or swelling affecting the hearing system.

To diagnose what type of tinnitus you have, your doctor will ask about your medical history, examine you, and may arrange hearing or imaging tests.

ABOVE:  
Tinnitus can affect your quality of life