

## Do you ever have patients complaining of ringing in their ears?

**Tinnitus** is the perception of sound in the ears or head where no external source is present. Many people describe it as a “ringing in the ears.” The actual sounds include but are not limited to: ringing, hissing, buzzing, roaring, whistling, pulsing, clicking or static.

### How common is tinnitus?

- Tinnitus is a common condition that affects about 1 in 5 people.
- Reports indicate that 70-90% of people suffering from tinnitus show some degree of **hearing deficit** when tested.

### What causes tinnitus?

There are literally hundreds of etiologies associated with tinnitus. Some of the most common are:

- Noise induced hearing loss
- Outer, middle, and inner ear pathologies.
- Ototoxic drugs.
- Non auditory pathologies such as vascular disease, poor circulation, and high cholesterol.

### Most common difficulties experienced with tinnitus

The effect on a patient ranges from slight annoyance to debilitating. Common difficulties include:

- Sleep disturbance
- Difficulty concentrating
- Anxiety
- Annoyance, irritation
- Stress
- Despair, frustration, depression

### What can be done to help?

The first step is to recommend a hearing test to determine if the patient experiencing tinnitus also has a hearing loss. For people with hearing loss and tinnitus, a hearing aid can address both of these concerns. A properly fitted hearing aid will not lower or change the sound of the tinnitus but can help mask it by amplifying other sounds. This causes the brain to pay less attention to the tinnitus and more attention to the natural sounds experienced in everyday life. Some hearing device manufacturers also offer tinnitus masking/habituation programs built into hearing aids for people who need additional relief.