

ACTIVE LIFE

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[BODY & SOUL]

Welcome to House Calls, where experts answer readers' questions on beauty and wellness. In this issue, **Andrea Nathanson, RN**, Co-founder, Executive Director of Qualicare Family Homecare, (qualicare.com) discusses...



Tinnitus Ringing in the Ears

Q I'm a 55-year-old man and I am constantly being plagued with ringing in my ears. I have an appointment with a specialist but, unfortunately, it is a few months off. In the interim, can you give me some ideas on why this is happening and how to cope with it? I'm not sleeping well and I'm irritable with my family. Thanks, Joseph

A Dear Joseph:
What you are describing is called Tinnitus – a ringing, buzzing, hissing or roaring in one or both ears. It's becoming more common, especially as the rock concert generation gets older. Although it can be very annoying, it is not usually a sign of a serious problem.

CAUSES

Tinnitus is often caused by damage to cells (cilia) in a part of the inner ear. In addition to too much Jimi Hendrix, this damage can be a result of normal aging and hearing loss, other loud noises, some side effects of medicines, head or neck injury, or from certain diseases. These cilia send signals to the brain that make you think you are hearing things that are not really there.

LEGITIMATE WAYS TO MASK AND ADAPT

This is a chronic condition that may be with you for the rest of your life. Unfortunately, there are a lot of "miracle cures" being promoted on the Internet that prey on people in your situation who are anxious to find relief.

I suggest you wait until you speak to the specialist. In the interim, it is a good idea to learn more about some

of the legitimate ways to mask and adapt to the symptoms in order to minimize the impact on your daily life. These options, some of which require more active involvement on your part, include:

1 | Hearing Aids: Most people find that they are less bothered by the sounds if they get a hearing aid. Hearing aids make the outside sounds clearer so the tinnitus is less noticeable.

2 | Tinnitus Retraining Therapy (TRT): With this therapy, a tinnitus expert will help you retrain your brain to perceive the ringing as a normal background sound rather than an annoying distraction.

3 | Sounds that cover up tinnitus: Listening to music or other soft sounds can sometimes mask or cover up the ringing sound.

4 | Biofeedback: With biofeedback you learn to breathe deeply when you hear the ringing and change your reaction to it. This technique helps you relax and be less bothered by the sound.

5 | Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT): CBT is a form of talk therapy where you are coached on ways to cope with the ringing sound and ways to distract yourself. It helps you view tinnitus in a different way.

When you meet the specialist, you'll be more prepared to discuss options with him. In any event, it's important that you find a viable strategy to help you get the much needed restorative sleep you need each night, and make you more likeable as well. n

Do you have a question or concern for one of our beauty, fashion and wellness specialists?
Email jayne@homesmag.com and we will do our best to provide an answer for you.