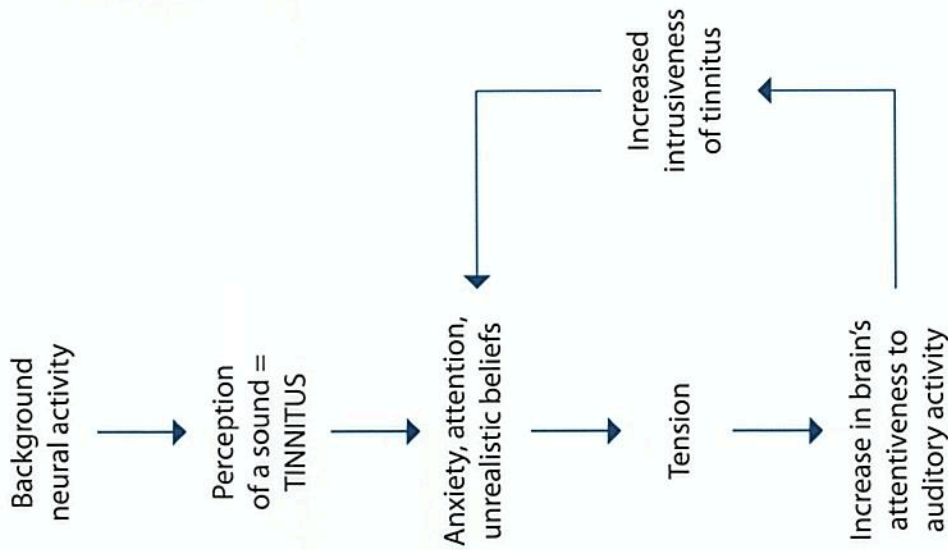




Tinnitus explained

The vicious circle of Tinnitus awareness



How to contact us

Darlington Memorial Hospital

Hollyhurst Road
Darlington
County Durham
DL3 6HX



Telephone: 01325 743 153

Textphone: 01325 487 327

Email: cdda-tr.audiologydmh@nhs.net



University Hospital of North Durham

North Road
Durham
DH1 5TW

Telephone: 0191 333 2305

Textphone: 0191 333 2741

Email: cdda-tr.audiologyuhnd@nhs.net

For further information on contacting us or getting to our hospital, please call one of the numbers above or visit www.cddft.nhs.uk

The information in this leaflet was compiled by the Audiology Department, County Durham and Darlington.

County Durham and Darlington
NHS Foundation Trust



Audiology Department

Tinnitus Management

with you  all the way

www.cddft.nhs.uk

What is Tinnitus?

Tinnitus is a term for noises heard either 'in the ear, both ears or in the head' where no obvious external sound source is present. Typically people describe these noises as ringing, whistling, buzzing or hissing.

Tinnitus is not a disease or illness; it is an auditory symptom which can be brought on, most commonly, by a change in hearing but it can also be triggered by either a physical or emotional change.

Some people are able to push their tinnitus into the background and for them it is not a problem. However, some people find their tinnitus intrusive and difficult to tolerate, this is especially true if a person does not understand how tinnitus is produced.

How are the sounds of Tinnitus produced?

Your ears are the peripheral sensors for your hearing system and pick up external sound. The function of the ear is to change this into electrical 'messages' that the brain can interpret. The brain then receives these 'messages' and decides whether they should be filtered out or listened to.

As well as these external sound 'messages' there is also background low-level activity taking place in your ears and auditory pathway all the time. Normally this low level activity is filtered out by your brain, however if something triggers your brain to pay attention to this activity then you will become aware of it as 'Tinnitus'.

The most typical trigger for becoming aware of tinnitus is a hearing loss. High stress levels may also make your brain less likely to filter out the background activity.

You will 'hear' or be aware of the tinnitus until its significance is understood. Once you understand how your tinnitus sounds are produced then you are a step closer to relearning to filter it out.

Some people will find it easier than others to filter out their tinnitus sounds. To help those who have difficulty filtering out their tinnitus we offer a programme of tinnitus management which can include counselling, sound enrichment and relaxation.

Did you know?

Around 15 per cent of people experience tinnitus at some stage and it's more likely to occur after the age of 60.



How Tinnitus management can help you

Some people find it difficult to filter out their tinnitus. The brain continues to focus upon the normal low level background activity and this makes the tinnitus more troublesome (see vicious cycle diagram on reverse).

Relief can be obtained by feeding the brain with low level external noise, where appropriate hearing aids can be used for this as well as free field noise generators.

By supplying the brain with constant low level sounds it is no longer as sensitive to the low level neural activity. Consequently the tinnitus is not so intrusive because the brain is not focusing on the tinnitus sounds alone.

By making the Tinnitus less intrusive it should be possible over time, for the brain to relearn to filter it out.

Relaxation techniques can also be helpful in breaking the vicious cycle of awareness and therefore help this process.

