

Are your ears ringing?

Ringing in the ears, known as tinnitus, is not a disease. It's a symptom of something wrong with your body's hearing system. And, it may not be "ringing" at all. Some people hear sounds like roaring, hissing, clicking or buzzing.

Experts think that tinnitus happens when certain nerve cells are out of balance. This makes a person hear a sound that isn't really there.

WHY DOES IT HAPPEN?

Tinnitus can be caused by many different things. Some possible causes include:

- Certain medicines – see a doctor right away if this happens. Tinnitus can be a serious side effect.
- High blood pressure
- Being around loud noises
- Sinus infections
- Brain injuries
- Injuries to the neck or head
- Anemia
- Thyroid problems
- Autoimmune diseases
- Temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorders

Sometimes a person has tinnitus without being able to identify an obvious cause.



CAN I MAKE IT STOP?

There is no cure for all types of tinnitus. But, if your doctor can find out what's causing it, there may be a treatment to resolve the issue. For instance, you might need treatment for high blood pressure or a sinus or ear infection.

Some people have tinnitus because they also have some hearing loss. That's why using a hearing aid may be helpful in these cases.

If there's no obvious cause, other things may help. They include:

- **Wearable sound generators.** These small devices fit inside the ear. They create a soft, pleasant noise that helps you ignore the sound of tinnitus.

- **White noise machines or sound machines.** Some people notice tinnitus more at night. This is probably because when you're lying down in a quiet room, the tinnitus is easier to hear. For these times, you may benefit from a machine that plays noise while you sleep to override the tinnitus sound.
- **Antidepressants or anti-anxiety medicines.** Some people have severe tinnitus that interferes with their life. Tinnitus can cause anxiety or depression. In these cases, medicine to treat these health conditions can help.



If you notice sounds or ringing in your ears, see your doctor. They may be able to help you find a solution that improves your quality of life.

Sources: American Tinnitus Association, National Institutes of Health