

## Tinnitus: Ringing in Ears

The hills may be alive but that is most definitely NOT the sound of music! The Mayo Clinic describes tinnitus as “the perception of noise or ringing in the ears.” Tinnitus does not happen from an external source of sound so usually only the person experiencing it can hear it... I think this is the only time when it's fair to say “It's all inside your head!”

There are many possible causes of tinnitus. Studies have proven that too much loud noise with not enough ear protection can directly lead to experiencing tinnitus. You may experience it for a few minutes or, in more serious cases, for much longer bouts of time. Tinnitus is not a disease itself but usually occurs from an underlying issue... it can be a symptom of a disease, head or neck trauma, medication, loud noise, stress, TMJ, drugs, etc...

Because tinnitus naturally sets in around the same age as menopause, it's difficult to say whether or not the two are directly related. However, several studies that have shown that tinnitus occurs in women more frequently during times of hormonal fluctuation, such as menstruation, pregnancy, and menopause. Many women also have reported that tinnitus occurred more frequently AFTER they started HRT, (hormone replacement therapy), which has been found to exacerbate this symptom.

If you are suffering from Tinnitus, finding out what your triggers are (i.e. caffeine, medication, stress, etc...) will be key to getting some relief. Healthy diet and getting adequate exercise can lead to less stress in your life and may also decrease the severity this symptom. And of course, wearing earplugs or turning down the disco could also help to prevent that high pitched squealing in your eardrums. Talk with your doctor to learn more about how you can prevent or treat any Tinnitus you may be experiencing.