

Valley Health

No easy answer for ringing in the ears but lots of ideas

Dear Dr. Meinig:

I thought it would go away by now, but for four months I have had this ringing and at times buzzing noise in my ears. During the day, I don't notice it too much but when I'm reading or in bed it seems louder. My doctors said that there isn't anything that can be done about it. I'm trying not to let it get me down and I

thought maybe some kind of vitamin might help stop it. Hoping you have some useful information to stop this annoying problem. — T.A.

Dear T.A.

Ringling, whistling, roaring, hissing, buzzing and similar ear sounds are said to affect some three million people. Technically, it is called tinnitus.

Although the exact mechanism involved in the cause is still unknown, some factors about the symptoms have been determined. For example, the use of aspirin has proven to have caused a number of these cases and stopping its use usually results in a disappearance of the sound.

Quinine, a drug used to treat malaria and leg cramps, can also cause tinnitus. Sensitive individuals have developed ear noises from the small amount of quinine in a gin and tonic and also from salicylates. In some women, diuretic pills have been responsible, as have birth control pills.

Blockage of the auditory canal or the eustachian tube, carbon monoxide, heavy metals, alcohol, heart disease, hypothyroidism, head trauma, temporo mandibular joint problems and other conditions are all known to have been involved in a select number of these cases.

Dr. Harold Hawkins found that those experiencing a "ticking noise" usually had low levels of calcium and its increase in the diet usually brought relief. He felt Vitamin



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A might play a role.

A physician who suffers ringing in his own ears, Dr. Charles Unice established The American Tinnitus Association at the Oregon Medical School in Portland. In 1984, the group had 40,000 members. In addition, more than 100 self-help tinnitus groups have sprung up around the country.

Treatment initially should involve investigating the various known possible causes. Stopping aspirin, quinine, salicylates, medications, drugs, sinus problems, bite irregularities, indulgence in alcohol and the correction of medical problems are included. The mild use of alcohol makes some better, other worse.

One individual reported good success with a multiple vitamin/mineral supplement and extra zinc. Another doing the same thing had no success but when she took Evening Primrose Oil capsules for one month, the noise in her ear disappeared. This makes sense and brings to mind the universal need for Omega 3 oils, the

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best sources of which are salmon oil and flax seed oil.

When these various possible reasons for ear noises don't work, masking techniques are used by many. Background music, radio at night and hearing aids that have a pleasant making sound are some of the ways of minimizing the disturbance.

T.A., you are wise to keep seeking solutions to your ear ringing problem. Don't let all the possible reasons for it get you down.

Everyone has questions about nutrition. Send yours to Dr. George, c/o Ojai Valley News, P. O. Box 277, Ojai 93024.

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