

UPDATES ABOUT TINNITUS IN AMERICA

(Source “The People’s Pharmacy”)

Between **25 and 50 million Americans** are plagued with a condition that is imperceptible to other people. They look normal, but they are suffering. In some cases, their agony drives them to consider suicide.

Tinnitus (pronounced either tin-NYE-tis or TIN-uh-tis) is frequently described as ringing in the ears. The sounds are described in many ways: hissing, chirping like crickets, electronic whines, static, rushing water, buzzing, whooshing or humming. Loudness varies, but it can get so intrusive it is hard to think, hear or sleep. Imagine trying to function with a radio stuck between stations at top volume. You can't turn it down and you can't turn it off. No one else can hear what the victim hears, but the sounds are not imaginary.

There are many causes of tinnitus. Veterans suffer as a result of exposure to loud noise during war. Tinnitus is one of the most common causes of disability among those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Hundreds of drugs can also trigger tinnitus. Aspirin and anti-inflammatory drugs like ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) or naproxen (Aleve) are notorious for this side effect. If the tinnitus is drug-induced, stopping the medication may eliminate the problem. But the cause of this condition is not always identifiable.

For decades doctors told sufferers there was nothing that could be done to quell the internal noise. Patients were often told to “learn to live with it”. Some were given drugs like Valium (diazepam) or Xanax (alprazolam) to ease the stress brought on by constant ringing, hissing or buzzing. Such solutions are unsatisfactory for millions of patients. Living with constant intrusive noise can ruin the quality of life.

Now, a number of devices are being developed to help tinnitus sufferers. Some high-end hearing aids are designed to **mask tinnitus noise at the same time they improve hearing.** Tinnitus Retraining Therapy (Tinnitus.org) provides patient with counseling and long-term exposure to white noise to overcome the internal sounds. It can take a long time (one to two years) to achieve satisfactory results, however.

One of promising approach is an FDA-approved device that helps retrain the brain. The Neuromonics system (Neuromonics.com) creates a sound that matches the Patient's particular tinnitus noise. This is then embedded in relaxing music that the Patient listens to for at least two hours daily. Within two months, many patients experience some relief, but the full program takes at least six months to complete.

In one study, **86 percent of the people using the Neuromonics Tinnitus Treatment got relief from their tinnitus.** This was significantly better than the 47 percent in a control group that received counseling and listened to white noise and the 23 percent of those who were given only counseling (*Ear, Nose and Throat Journal*, June, 2008). Now that researchers are learning how to retune the brain, many tinnitus sufferers may be able to get relief at last!

[Southwest Florida Tinnitus and Hearing Center](#) and [Hoglund Family Hearing and Audiology Center](#) offer **COMPLIMENTARY Tinnitus Consultations** for those seeking more information about their personal condition and available treatments. **CALL (239) 498-7142** to arrange an appointment!