

Your tinnitus appointment

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Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio tape or computer disk, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please telephone the PALS desk on 01271 314090.

Who will I see for my tinnitus appointment and how long will my appointment take?

You will see an audiologist specialised in tinnitus counselling and trained in Tinnitus Therapy. We offer modern therapeutic approaches for patients and use a variety of techniques designed to investigate and improve this condition.

Please contact the department if you require any specific communication support, mobility aid or other relevant assistance for this appointment. You are welcome to attend with a partner, carer or significant other. Our reception hours are 8.30am – 5pm Monday to Friday.

The appointment will last between **60 to 90 minutes**.

What is tinnitus?

Tinnitus is classified as the perception of sound that does not come from an external source. Each patient will describe their tinnitus differently, with sounds that might include ringing, buzzing, humming, hissing, rushing, whining, clicking, droning and occasionally music. Tinnitus can also beat in time with the patient's pulse and this is known as pulsatile tinnitus. Tinnitus can sound like it is in one ear, both ears or coming from within the head. Every person with tinnitus has their own very personal tinnitus experience.

What can I expect from my tinnitus appointment?

It is important that your ears are completely clear of wax for this appointment. Advice on how to do this is included in your appointment letter.

If you have any questions during the appointment, please ask us at any point.

The specialist audiologist will take a detailed history about your tinnitus and a thorough hearing assessment will be undertaken if it hasn't previously. You can expect to be asked some detailed questions to help build a picture of the impact that tinnitus has on your life. Questions you may be asked include:

- What does your tinnitus sound like?
- Is it continual or intermittent?
- How long have you been experiencing these sounds?
- Did it come on suddenly?
- Were there any significant things going on in your life when you first noticed it?
- How does it affect your concentration or sleep?
- What coping strategies do you already use?
- What are your concerns about it?

The specialist audiologist will also:

- Explain the results of the hearing test and how the ear works
- Explain what tinnitus is
- Explain how tinnitus can relate to stress

This will then help us to develop a treatment plan and introduce strategies designed to alleviate tinnitus. This might include personalised advice about sound enrichment or sound therapy (including hearing aids when appropriate), relaxation techniques and better sleep techniques and coping strategies.

Tinnitus therapy looks at the way the brain is involved in this perception of sound. It is important to see the relationship between the physical, mental and emotional impact of tinnitus and how this can help people improve their tinnitus, by learning to take control through self-help strategies to improve the perception of tinnitus and in turn the emotional reaction to it.

The therapy prescribed will depend on your needs and the cause of the tinnitus. Understanding and having some information about your tinnitus is the first step towards effectively managing it. For some people, simply knowing why they have tinnitus is all that is needed to reduce anxiety levels and actually help improve the perception of the tinnitus.

The specialist audiologist may suggest trying digital hearing aids, if a hearing loss has been detected, or white noise generators which may be beneficial with the desensitisation process. We are also able to provide hearing aids combined with white noise generators in the same device.

We may also discuss whether you would benefit from a referral to an ear, nose and throat (ENT) consultant for an MRI scan if necessary or sometimes onward to the psychology team. Again, this will depend on the individual case, the cause of tinnitus and the impact it is having on your quality of life.

Will I receive any follow-up care?

Follow up appointments will be made as and when required. Generally, you will be seen again by the specialist audiologist either three or six months following your initial appointment. The purpose of a follow up appointment is to monitor the success of the initial treatment plan and address any residual concerns you might have about your tinnitus and adapt the coping strategies if necessary. If you have had hearing aids fitted, we will also see how you are getting on with them and ask you some questions about the improvement they have made.

When you no longer require support, we will either discharge you, or if you have hearing aids review your hearing after five years.

What will happen to the results of my appointment?

A copy of the hearing test result and report of the discussion about your tinnitus and treatment plan will be sent to your GP. You will automatically receive a copy of this report, unless you decline. If you require an onward referral to the ENT Department who might request further tests, a letter will be sent to them explaining the reason for the referral. A copy of the hearing test and brief record of the main points of discussion and treatment plan will be stored in your audiology records.

Further information

For further information about tinnitus, visit:

www.tinnitus.org.uk

How to contact us?

If you have any queries about your appointment or problems as a result of the test/procedure or about your hearing aid(s), then you can contact the Audiology Department between 8am and 6pm, Monday to Friday or by email.

If you're unable to attend your appointment then please contact us immediately.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or e-mail ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple. Alternatively, it may be possible for us to arrange an appointment in your area.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of the ward staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Patient Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.patientopinion.org.uk.

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