

Food, drink and tinnitus

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Some people with tinnitus feel that it is affected by food and drink. There's no consistent evidence to link certain foods or drinks to tinnitus, but here we explain the pros and cons of altering your diet.

Foods

Some people connect the ups and downs of their tinnitus with eating certain foods. However, many other people find that these same substances have no effect upon their tinnitus.

Tinnitus and general diet

There is some weak evidence that dietary factors can have an influence on Ménière's disease, a condition of the inner ear. But this is generally with regard to the dizziness of Ménière's rather than the tinnitus.

For all other types of tinnitus, the links

are unproven and the research presents some contradictory findings. Many of the links seem to show only a minor change in risk, so it seems likely that general diet is not a major contributor to tinnitus. Instead, follow a balanced diet which promotes good general health. See the national healthy eating guidelines for more information

www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well

Elimination diets

Despite the lack of evidence of universal triggers, we do recognise that some people notice a link between certain foods and their tinnitus.

Unfortunately, there is no simple test to prove such reactions. As with other types of food intolerance, the only way to investigate this is to perform a trial elimination diet. This involves completely removing the suspected food type from your diet for 2-6 weeks and then reintroducing it to see if your tinnitus is affected.

There are some problems associated with this approach. Firstly, going on an elimination diet can mean that you monitor your tinnitus more closely



Tinnitus UK tries very hard to make sure our information is right, but it cannot tell you everything. It is not a substitute for medical advice. You should always check with your doctor or hearing health professional.

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than normal, particularly during the reintroduction phase. This can make the tinnitus seem louder. Secondly, excluding food groups can be dangerous and should only be done after discussion with your GP and/or a dietician. Finally, removing items of food that were previously enjoyed can add to the overall burden of tinnitus.

We understand that you may be searching for something you can do to ease your tinnitus. It is natural to be looking for a way to control it. Our Tinnitus Support Team cannot offer medical advice but are available to listen and support you when needed.

Tinnitus and dietary supplements

The dietary supplement industry is a huge global business, and research has shown that around a quarter of people with tinnitus used dietary supplements such as vitamins, minerals and herbal medicines in an attempt to treat their tinnitus.

However, for most people with tinnitus there is no research evidence to suggest that dietary supplements have any effect. There is some weak evidence to suggest that people who have a vitamin or mineral deficiency may benefit from having the deficiency corrected. If you do not have a deficiency, there is no proven benefit from taking supplements.

If you think you may have a deficiency, discuss this with your GP as there are often simple tests to prove or disprove this.

Our website has more detailed information regarding some of the common supplements including vitamin B12, zinc and magnesium.

The Tinnitus UK website has more detailed information regarding some of the common supplements at **www.tinnitus.org.uk/tinnitus-treatments**



Drinks

Caffeine

People with tinnitus are frequently advised to avoid drinks containing caffeine such as tea and coffee. There is no scientific basis for this advice. Several large scientific reviews have shown that caffeine is not associated with the causes of tinnitus.

The sensible advice regarding tea or coffee drinking therefore seems to be maintain a moderate and constant intake.

If you are worried about your caffeine intake and want to cut it out of your diet, remember that this can produce side effects, particularly headaches and nausea, which could potentially worsen your tinnitus.

Alcohol

People with tinnitus often ask us if they should stop drinking alcohol. Red wine is especially reported as a concern.

Once again, there seems little hard evidence for this. Multiple research projects have been published regarding alcohol and tinnitus and the consensus is that alcohol is not a risk factor for tinnitus.

This does not, of course, rule out the possibility that you might have

a personal response to alcohol. As with foods, a trial withdrawal and reintroduction may help to establish whether alcohol is related to your level of tinnitus.

Some people find that alcohol actually helps their tinnitus. To maintain good health, we should all keep our alcohol consumption within safe limits.

The government advises that this means not drinking more than 14 units of alcohol per week. This is equivalent to:

- 6 175ml glasses of 13% wine per week or
- 6 pints of 4% beer or lager per week or
- 5 pints of 4.5% cider per week or
- 14 25ml measures of 40% spirits per week

The guidelines are the same for men and women.



Tobacco

It has been known for some time that tobacco smoking can contribute to inner ear hearing loss. There is now a substantial body of research showing that smoking is also a risk factor for developing tinnitus.

Giving up smoking can also improve your general health. The NHS website has details of local smoking cessation services near you at www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/nhs-stop-smoking-services-help-you-quit/

Help and support

The Tinnitus UK Support Team can answer your questions on any tinnitus related topics:

Telephone: **0800 018 0527**

Web chat: **tinnitus.org.uk**

Email: **helpline@tinnitus.org.uk**

Text/SMS: **07537 416841**

We also offer a free tinnitus e-learning programme, Take on Tinnitus at takeontinnitus.co.uk

References

The list of references consulted in the production of this leaflet is available on request.

Alternative formats

This publication is available in large print on request.

Feedback

We welcome feedback on all our information.

You can pass your comments to our Communications Team:

Telephone: **0114 250 9933**

Email: **communications@tinnitus.org.uk**

or by writing to us at the address on page 4.

Tinnitus UK publications

**Available in Easy Read*

Our information leaflets are written by leading tinnitus professionals and provide accurate, reliable and authoritative information which is updated regularly. Please contact us if you would like to receive a copy of any of our information leaflets listed below, or they can be downloaded from our website.

For adults:

*All about tinnitus**
Complementary therapy for tinnitus: an opinion
Drugs and tinnitus
Ear wax removal and tinnitus
Flying and the ear
Food, drink and tinnitus
*Hearing aids and tinnitus**
Hyperacusis
Ideas for relaxation without sound
Information for musicians
Mindfulness for tinnitus
Musical hallucination (musical tinnitus)
Noise and the ear
Otosclerosis

Pulsatile tinnitus
Relaxation
*Self help for tinnitus**
Sound therapy
Sources of mutual support for tinnitus
Supporting someone with tinnitus
Taming tinnitus
Tinnitus and disorders of the temporomandibular joint (TMJ) and neck
Tinnitus: a parent's guide
Tinnitus: a teacher's guide
Tinnitus and sleep disturbance
Tinnitus and stress
*Tinnitus services**

For children:

Ellie, Leila and Jack have tinnitus (under 8s)
Tinnitus (8-11 year olds)
Tinnitus (11-16 year olds)
Ellie, Leila and Jack have tinnitus activity book
Tinnitus activity book (8-11 year olds)
Tinnitus activity book (11-16 year olds)



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