

Hearing Loss & Ringing in the ears (Tinnitus)

Difficulty Hearing

Hearing loss can occur in one or both ears and tends creep up you.

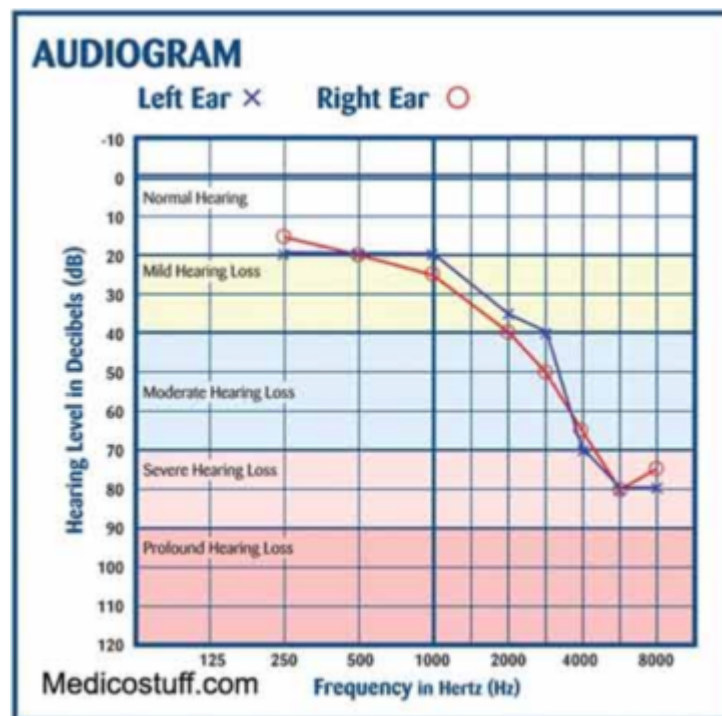
You may notice that it is more difficult to work out what people are saying especially in crowded situations such as pubs or restaurants. In addition, it may be more difficult to understand mobile phones conversations.

You need your ears examined by an experienced trained professional.

A hearing test can be performed by audiologists in the NHS and on the High Street by such companies as Specsavers.

Specsavers provide a free hearing test, and if there is significant ear wax, then they can remove this for £55 (Specsavers) prior to the hearing test.

Typical picture of significant hearing loss is as follows: -



If your hearing loss is moderate i.e. 40 decibels (dB) at the 4khz you may significantly benefit from a hearing aid.

Hearing aids are provided on the NHS and in the private sector and are very effective.

If you do go to the private sector for the more sophisticated ones, it is very important that you should have a trial period of at least 28 days after fitting to see whether it works for you and if it does not then you should be able to return the hearing aids to the provider and get your money back. Your hearing aid provider should be a member of the Health and Care Professions Council and the British Academy of Audiology.

Being aware that you do have hearing loss is important in that it reiterates the need for good ear protection, especially if you are exposed to high levels of noises.

If practical, try and avoid noisy environments, or if you are in a pub or a restaurant seek areas that are less noisy. Explain to friends and colleagues your problem with hearing and ask them to be understanding of it and speak more clearly rather than to shout.

If you are exposed to high levels of noise at work or loud concerts or shooting it is best to use hearing protection such as ear plugs or ear defenders.

It is best to avoid “in-the-ear” earphones with no noise reduction as this can deliver high levels of sound – it is better to use “over-the-ear” head-phones, or in-the -ear with noise reduction.

If you have tinnitus (see below), the use of hearing aids is effective in reducing tinnitus and it will improve your hearing.

Tinnitus

The sound of “ringing” or “humming” in the ears, known as “tinnitus”. There are many causes but exposure to high levels of noise, including shooting and explosions, are particularly well-known causes.

Patients become aware of the tinnitus especially in quiet situations and going to sleep at night.

Simple measures such as listening to the radio/podcasts as you go off to sleep at night are effective in getting you to ignore the tinnitus as you go off to sleep.

If the ringing is associated with significant hearing loss then a hearing aid is particularly effective in suppressing the ringing sensation.

To get general help it is useful to contact The British Tinnitus Association on tel: 0800 018 0527. The BTA can assist you in contacting support groups which offer support around better managing your tinnitus and provide an opportunity to meet and get inspiration from others living with tinnitus, with occasional talks and presentations from guest speakers. Support groups are facilitated by independent organisers, supported by the BTA.

However, if the ringing sensation is not associated with hearing loss, and does not respond to simple measures, then treatment such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) for tinnitus is a powerful and effective technique.

It is important to remember that for the vast majority of people, the outlook is good with treatment resulting in a reduced awareness of the ringing.

Prevention of further hearing loss & increasing tinnitus

Experiencing hearing loss and/or ringing in the ears are warning symptoms that you should protect your hearing as much as possible and it is important that you always wear ear protection if you are exposed to high levels of noises.

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