



Impact of life style on tinnitus

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Abstract

There is limited evidence that directly shows specific foods (or the exclusion of specific foods) improves tinnitus symptoms. However, it is beyond question that a healthy diet has many beneficial effects on the body, which may lessen the impact of tinnitus. A health-conscious diet can reduce hypertension and weight, increase blood flow, heighten energy levels, and improve emotional well-being — all of which can improve your tinnitus.

Keywords: Tinnitus, Diet, Lifestyle, salt, weight

Introduction

Working with a doctor, patients with tinnitus and Ménière's disease should explore a low-salt diet, as there is a very strong correlation between salt consumption and Ménière's symptoms. One diet-related tinnitus issue that receives a lot of discussion is the consumption of caffeine. There is very little scientific evidence that shows caffeine exacerbates tinnitus symptoms. That being said, tinnitus patients should track their own experience with caffeine and adjust accordingly. If caffeine seems to impact your tinnitus, then consider reducing your consumption; if caffeine has no impact and/or is an enjoyable part of your daily routine, then you may want to continue consumption as normal. (This general rule is true for most other dietary considerations, including alcohol.)

Stress management

Physical Activity

Exercise isn't only good for your physical body — it's also good for your emotional well-being and can help minimize the burden of tinnitus. Exercise reduces stress, which can exacerbate tinnitus.

Social Activity

Many tinnitus patients report feelings of social isolation, due to difficulties with interpersonal communication, sound sensitivity, and/or irritability. Unfortunately, removing yourself from social situations creates a cycle of negative reinforcements that may make tinnitus an even larger problem. (Isolation causes patients to focus more on their tinnitus, which then makes it less likely that they'll socialize, which further focuses attention on tinnitus, and so on.)

Social experiences with friends, family, and peers can positively distract patients from their tinnitus symptoms. They can also improve emotional wellness, general feelings of contentment and optimism. Moreover, sharing your experience of tinnitus with others can help you develop a peer support network that may help you through a difficult period.

Recreational Activities and Hobbies

Some patients believe that having tinnitus means they must give up activities that they enjoy. That is absolutely not the case. Patients can and should continue activities that make them happy and which provide positive diversions from a focus on tinnitus.

Some activities may even provide the benefit of directly masking the sound of tinnitus. Many bicyclists report that the sound of wind while riding obscures the sound of tinnitus.

Tinnitus patients may need to make adjustments or take certain precautions prior to engaging in specific recreational activities — particularly activities that involve loud noise. Patients should consult their hearing health professional on the appropriate hearing protection for activities that involve exposure to noise.

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

A therapy that emphasizes “mindfulness” — a deliberate and non-judgemental awareness of one's physical sensations, sensory perceptions, emotional reactions, and cognitive processes. Rather than struggling (often in vain) to ignore tinnitus, MBSR teaches patients to wholly accept, embrace, and control their experience. In doing so, patients put themselves in a better position to manage their condition. It can also address negative feelings of anger and apathy that often accompany tinnitus.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)

Like other mindful-based approaches, ACT emphasizes the need to reduce experiential avoidance of tinnitus. Patients are taught to fully experience thoughts, perceptions, and emotions in a direct, non-judgemental way. By fully accepting negative thoughts and feelings, patients can find greater control over those reactions.

Stress Reduction

Several of the options listed above have the benefit of reducing stress. In general, any activity that lowers stress may also lessen the intensity of tinnitus symptoms. In addition to diet, exercise, and socialization, patients can explore other methods of relaxation, including meditation.

Biofeedback

Biofeedback is relaxation technique that teaches patients to control certain autonomic body functions, such as pulse, muscle tension, and skin temperature. The goal of biofeedback is to help people manage stress and anxiety by changing the body's reaction to these negative influences. Biofeedback is used for a variety of different chronic conditions and many tinnitus patients notice a reduction in symptoms when they are able to control stress.

Hypnotherapy

Hypnotherapy has been shown to promote relaxation and reduce anxiety. It may also alter neural connections between areas of the brain. It is sometimes suggested as a wellness option for tinnitus patients.

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