

# Tinnitus Supports



**chime**

The National Charity for Deaf  
and Hard of Hearing People

# Mission and vision



## OUR VISION

Chime's vision is a future where Deaf and Hard of Hearing people are fully included and have equal opportunities.



## OUR MISSION

Chime's mission is to champion and support Deaf and Hard of Hearing people and advocate for full inclusion and equality.

# Our Values

At Chime, we are determined to work with our values in mind. We want to create a service and support network that is inclusive and empowering, has a positive impact, shows integrity and is collaborative.



## AIM HIGH AND THINK BIG

We respect diversity and recognise the worth and dignity of every person.



## MAKE A DIFFERENCE

We work together with dedication, empathy, creativity and passion to meet the needs of our clients.



## TOGETHER IS BETTER

Teamwork is important to us. We strive to build meaningful relationships and to create more accessible services and supportive communities.



## DO THE RIGHT THING

Our person-centred approach is open, honest, ethical and fair and we are proud of what we do.

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# What is Tinnitus?

**Tinnitus is the name for the condition when people hear a sound that comes from an internal rather than an external source**

Tinnitus is often described as a ringing sound, but actually it may be heard as ringing, buzzing, whistling, roaring, rumbling, whining, clicking or other variations. In fact, it can be quite common to have more than one tinnitus sound. It may be soft or loud, high pitched or low pitched.

Tinnitus is not a disease. It can result from a number of events and conditions. Exposure to loud noise is a common one; it can also be associated with ageing, head or ear surgery, hearing loss or following an emotional trauma or event.

For some people, tinnitus develops after a cold or flu, an ear infection or a period of severe stress. Temporary tinnitus following a night at a loud party or nightclub is common, but repeated exposure to loud noise and music can result in long-term ear damage, including permanent tinnitus. In some cases there is no known cause for tinnitus. Tinnitus is not a psychological illness, but it can cause psychological distress especially if it is not managed effectively.

# How tinnitus affects people

The condition can have a serious effect on a person's quality of life, particularly in the period after the person is initially affected. Coping with tinnitus noises can be debilitating, leading to anxiety and depression; loss of interest in work, leisure activities and relationships.

Sleep may be disturbed and concentration affected. Little understanding by others of a

condition that is not visible can increase a person's isolation. It is estimated that more than 7% of people report persistent tinnitus, and about one in ten of these are significantly troubled by it.

However, getting the support to help understand your tinnitus will enable you to manage it more effectively so that it reduces the negative impact on your life.

# What should I do if I have tinnitus?

Your first step to managing tinnitus is to visit your GP. They will check if anything, blocking your ear canal such as ear wax. Your doctor may refer you to an ENT (ear, nose & throat specialist) to investigate the possible cause of your tinnitus and an audiologist for the purpose of a hearing assessment.

For many there is no pathological cause for their tinnitus, but for anyone struggling to manage their tinnitus, our dedicated tinnitus advisors can help find ways to effectively manage the condition.

# Chime's dedicated tinnitus advisors

Chime is a focal point of support and assistance to those who suffer from tinnitus. Our team of dedicated Tinnitus Advisors can provide you with one-to-one support.

We focus on ensuring that those with tinnitus don't feel alone.

We are here to answer any questions you might have about tinnitus, and provide you with resources and coping strategies to manage it more effectively.

**Call us today:  
1800 256 257**

# Tinnitus groups at Chime

Chime hosts a Tinnitus Art & Relaxation Group, (Tallaght) and a Tinnitus group, (in Killarney) where people can meet and discover art and other management techniques as well as an opportunity to meet others who are on a similar journey.

*Contact your local Chime Resource Centre for information on upcoming events.*



# Tinnitus Toolbox

Chime's Tinnitus Toolbox is a four week programme designed to help you manage your tinnitus.

We know that living with tinnitus can be challenging, but with the right tools and support, it's possible to manage and find relief. The programme is designed to help you understand your tinnitus, manage symptoms, and improve your overall quality of life. Each week will introduce practical strategies, expert guidance, and techniques to help you cope.

There are programmes throughout the year and you will have the opportunity to attend either in person or online.

## **Week 1: Introduction & education**

You will learn the causes, types and mechanisms of tinnitus, explore how it can impact your daily life, sleep and mental health and we will help you set realistic, personalised goals for managing your tinnitus.

## **Week 2: Sound therapy & relaxation techniques**

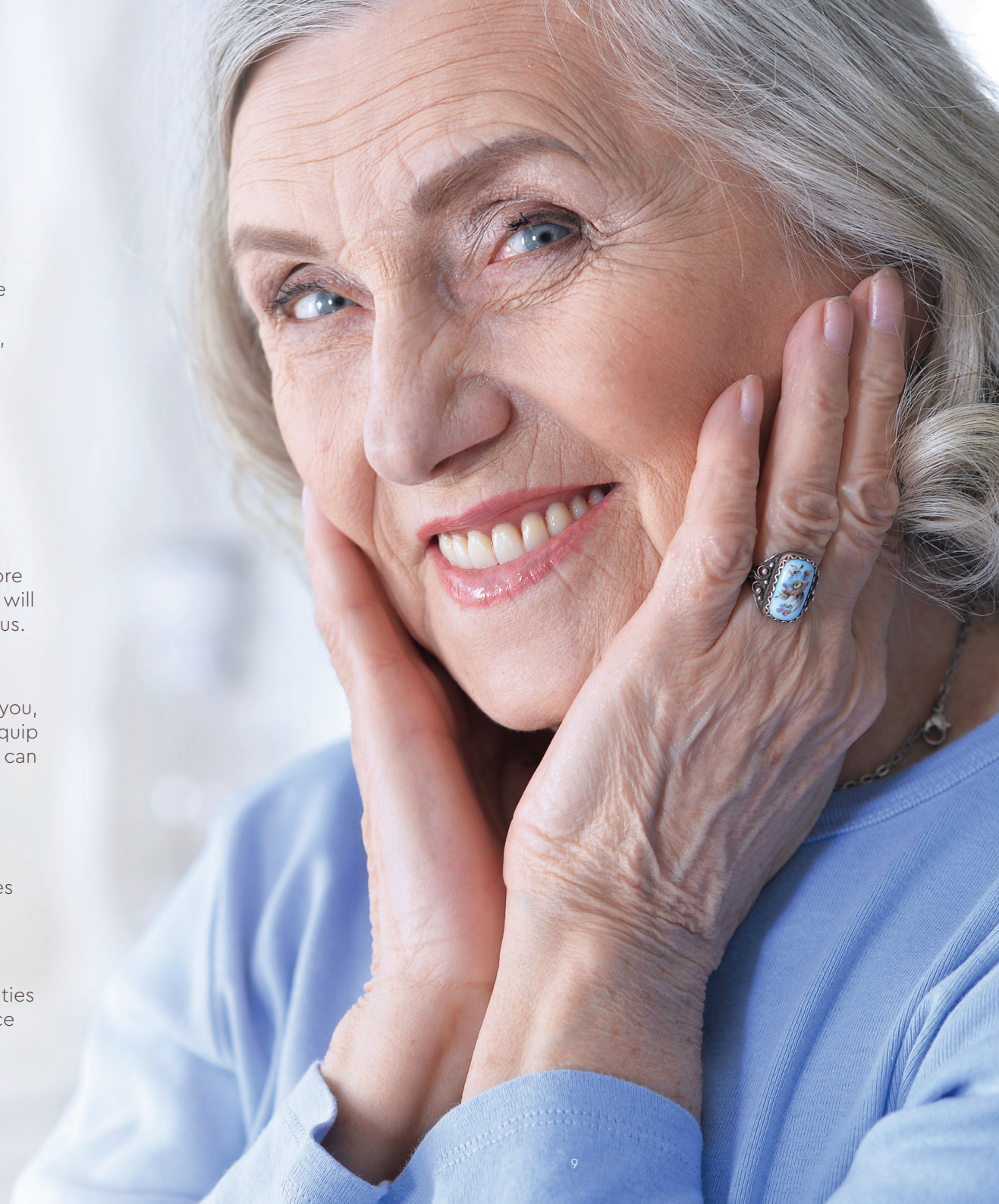
We will introduce a variety of sound therapy options available to you, as well as relaxation techniques and sleep hygiene, to help you equip yourself with practical relaxation methods to reduce stress which can impact your tinnitus.

## **Week 3: Lifestyle adjustments**

You will learn how physical activity can help you manage your tinnitus symptoms. We aim to empower attendees with strategies to challenge and reframe negative thoughts about tinnitus.

## **Week 4: Review and ongoing self-management**

We will encourage you to join support groups or online communities for additional and ongoing support and ensure you the confidence and tools required to continue the ongoing management of your tinnitus effectively and independently.





# Chime technology can help

There are many ways to manage tinnitus. For some people modern technology can bring much comfort. Chime offers a range of Assistive Technology aimed at people who suffer from tinnitus.

- Hearing aids often are helpful for people who have hearing loss along with tinnitus. Using a hearing aid adjusted to carefully control outside sound levels may make it easier for you to hear. The better you hear, the less you may notice your tinnitus.
- Sound maskers are small electronic devices that fit in the ear and use a soft, pleasant sound to help mask the tinnitus.
- Pillow speakers help many people with tinnitus who have difficulty getting to sleep at night. They are incredibly thin under-pillow speakers with integrated amplification to help you get a good night's rest.
- Tabletop sound generators are used as an aid for relaxation or sleep. Placed near your bed, you can program a generator to play pleasant sounds such as waves, waterfalls, rain, or the sounds of a summer night.

Our Tinnitus Advisors will be able to talk you through all of the above options or they are now available on our website [shop.chime.ie](https://shop.chime.ie)

# Management techniques

- Stress can make tinnitus worse, so try to keep your stress and anxiety levels low through relaxation and exercise. Seeing a counsellor may also be helpful.
- Take a 'holistic' approach to your health – one that includes your whole person and lifestyle. Improving your general health, through better diet and more exercise, could also help with your tinnitus.
- If you enjoy going to clubs or concerts regularly, invest in a pair of good ear plugs that lower volume without affecting sound quality.
- You could try a complementary therapy, such as acupuncture, homeopathy or reflexology. While research has shown that complementary therapy is unlikely to have a direct benefit on your tinnitus, it may help you manage your stress levels.
- Check in with your local Chime Resource Centre for upcoming events, talks and workshops where you will meet people who also experience tinnitus.
- Good Sleeping Habits:
  - If you are struggling to sleep try to focus on rest rather than sleep.
  - Listen to ambient music or nature sounds with relaxation apps.
  - Avoid screen time before bed.
  - Avoid TV and radio as these can be thought-provoking and stop you relaxing.
  - Avoid caffeinated or alcoholic drinks late at night as these can disturb your natural sleep pattern.
  - If your tinnitus is keeping you awake for long periods at night, try something distracting – such as making a warm milky drink.

# Frequently asked questions

## Q. What causes tinnitus?

There can be many causes of tinnitus. Some of the most common are:

- Hearing Loss associated with ageing.
- Exposure to loud noise.
- An emotional upset or an illness, injury or infection which may not be related to the hearing mechanism.
- It can also appear as a reaction to, or side effect of a drug. Situations such as this can damage or over stimulate tiny hair cells in the inner ear, sending an irregular, unbalanced stream of nerve signals to the brain, which perceives it as tinnitus.

## Q. Is there a cure?

Sometimes the cause of tinnitus is treatable; for example antibiotics can clear up an infection of the middle ear; wax

can be removed from a blocked ear; minor surgery may eliminate some cases of tinnitus. However, even without an immediate solution, there are number of ways to get significant relief from tinnitus, and it is always possible with appropriate information, advice and support to reduce the distress that tinnitus can cause.

## Q. Where can I get expert help and advice?

Your GP can carry out an initial examination to check for wax or infection and may suggest ways of managing your tinnitus. It is also recommended that your GP refer you to an Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT) Consultant to investigate if there is a pathological cause of your tinnitus.

After your initial tinnitus diagnosis, call our Chime dedicated Tinnitus Advisors for practical help and emotional support.

## Q. What help is available from ENT departments/ tinnitus clinics?

Many people will find a thorough consultation, examination and diagnosis from a specialist reassuring. The specialist may recommend and arrange treatment which could, depending on the cause, include;

- Hearing aids – even if there is only slight hearing loss, the use of a hearing aid may help mask tinnitus.
- Relaxation therapy – such as stress management and relaxation tapes.
- Counselling – an essential part of any successful tinnitus management programme.
- Medication for the effects of tinnitus – (e.g. anxiety, sleeping problems, depression.)
- Surgery – for abnormalities in blood or muscles in or near the ear.

## Q. What makes tinnitus worse?

Many people with tinnitus are not distressed by it – it is simply

something which is there but does not affect their lives. However, some people do become distressed by it. They may find their tinnitus threatening in some way or they may believe that it is being caused by a serious disease, that it is getting louder or that it will last forever.

Most people find that their tinnitus goes up and down – it may be aggravated by stress, loud noise and certain drugs but it doesn't usually get worse with time alone.

## Q. How can I alleviate my tinnitus?

It is important to remove its threatening qualities and this can often only be achieved by support and advice from your local Chime Tinnitus Advisor. Anxiety and tension can make tinnitus much worse, so learning how to relax is important – perhaps by joining a relaxation or yoga class and teaching yourself relaxation techniques.

Whether you want to listen to soothing music or prefer to be guided through easy-to-follow relaxation exercises, there are

many CD's or sound relaxation Apps to choose from. There is a strong link between tinnitus and stress. Muscle tension, anxiety and irritability that result from stress can make your tinnitus worse; and can perpetuate a vicious cycle.

Your local Chime Tinnitus Advisor can advise you in relation to various different options.

### **Q. How can I cope with or alleviate my tinnitus and the effects of it?**

- avoid loud noise exposure
- keep occupied
- don't sleep during the day
- don't rush around unnecessarily
- with the support of a Tinnitus Advisor, try masking the sound
- don't drink too much alcohol
- try not to worry
- maintain a balanced diet
- attend a self-help group
- try counselling
- talk to a friend
- develop a hobby.

### **Q. Is there anything else I can do?**

If you find that some things you eat or drink have an effect on your tinnitus, you could adjust

your diet. You should wear proper ear protection in very noisy situations (for example, when using power tools or near noisy music, which can damage the ears and make tinnitus worse).

Having something else more pleasant and interesting to listen to, such as music, TV or radio can prove a valuable distraction to tinnitus and help 'mask' its noise. Many people with tinnitus say that it 'isn't there' when they're not listening to it – tinnitus is a very real noise but if you're not tuned to it, it can be much less of a problem.

### **Q. Will 'alternative' treatments help my tinnitus?**

Some people with tinnitus have reported that acupuncture, hypnotherapy, homeopathy and other 'complementary' therapies have been of benefit. Although they probably have no direct effect on the ear, they may result in reduced tension, anxiety and depression and better sleep – which can have a secondary beneficial effect on the tinnitus. Most 'alternative' treatments are only available privately, but some maybe available through your local Health Board. Check

with your GP for services in your area.

### **Q. Does tinnitus affect children?**

Although tinnitus occurs more in people in their middle or later years, it can affect younger people too, including children, who tend to complain much less about symptoms and to accept them more readily. With any ear problem, in children it is important to seek specialist help – symptoms can often be effectively treated.

### **Q. Does tinnitus cause deafness?**

Research indicates that tinnitus does not cause deafness, although they can both be caused by noise damage to the ears. Tinnitus may affect your ability to concentrate, so you could 'miss' conversation. Some people even find that the fear that tinnitus could cause deafness can even make their tinnitus louder.

### **Q. Will a hearing aid help my tinnitus?**

We offer a full hearing assessment free of charge with advice and information on how a hearing aid may reduce your perception of your tinnitus in cases where there is an underlying hearing loss.



# Contact us

For more information on our  
Tinnitus Supports or other  
Chime services, please  
contact us today.

Mobile:  
087 922 1046

Landline:  
1800 256 257

email:  
[info@chime.ie](mailto:info@chime.ie)

[chime.ie](http://chime.ie)



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