Musical tinnitus
(musical hallucination)

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Tinnitus is the perception of sound in the absence of any corresponding external sound. This information has been written to help you understand more about the form of tinnitus where music is heard. This is called musical hallucination, or musical tinnitus.

What is musical hallucination?

Musical hallucination (MH) is the experience of hearing music when none is being played. Hearing sound that no-one else can hear is quite common, but the experience is normally of a simple sound such as a buzzing, ringing, or sizzling: this is known as tinnitus. In a small number of people however, these experiences can be more complex and emotive, and music can be heard.

What is MH like?

Musical hallucinations have a compelling sense of reality and are often mistaken for real music until it becomes clear that none is being played. This is especially true when MH are experienced for the first time. The sounds are typically heard as short fragments of simple melodies - often from music heard regularly and familiar from youth and especially from hymns and carols. Individuals with hearing loss sometimes notice that the music in these hallucinations sounds as it did when it was first heard and not how it would with their current level of hearing problems than the sound of tinnitus.

Who gets MH?

Although anyone can experience MH, it is more common in women than in men, as well as in those over 60 years of age. Individuals who live alone, and those with hearing loss are also more likely to

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reassured that there is no serious underlying cause. If MH continues to be troublesome despite this, it can be managed with the techniques used to treat other forms of tinnitus. It might be appropriate to use medication to treat the underlying condition contributing to the MH and your doctor will be happy to discuss this with you.

For further information

Our helpline staff can answer your questions on this and other tinnitus related topics on 0800 018 0527.

References


BTA publications

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.

• All about tinnitus
• Balance and tinnitus
• Compensation for tinnitus and hearing loss
• Complementary therapy for tinnitus: an opinion
• Drugs and tinnitus
• Ear wax removal and tinnitus
• Flying and the ear
• Food, drink and tinnitus
• Glue ear
• Good night, sleep tight

Alternative formats

This publication is available in large print on request.

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• Hearing aids and tinnitus
• Hyperacusis
• Information for musicians
• Motorcycling and the ear
• Noise and the ear
• Otosclerosis
• Pulsatile tinnitus
• Relaxation
• Save your ears
• Self help for tinnitus
• Sound therapy
• Stress and tinnitus
• Taming tinnitus: behavioural techniques
• Tinnitus and disorders of the temporomandibular joint (TMJ) and neck
• Who’s who in the tinnitus clinic

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