

WC Departments



LORD OF THE Ringing

Can't Stop the Ringing? An Effective Treatment for Tinnitus.

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Many Americans have experienced ringing, buzzing, hissing, roaring or pulsing sounds in the ear or head although the sound is not present in the environment. This perception is termed tinnitus (pronounced /tin I tis/ or /TIN i tis/). Tinnitus may be intermittent or constant and can vary in intensity, pitch and quality among individuals. There are many possible causes or triggers for tinnitus. However, tinnitus most often occurs secondary to hearing loss. Certain foods, medications and health conditions may trigger or exacerbate tinnitus, but the most common offender is stress. Although occasional tinnitus is commonly reported, it can occur for prolonged periods of time. It has been estimated that approximately 2 million Americans suffer from severe or debilitating tinnitus, while many more experience tinnitus that causes them to seek the advice of a professional. For these individuals, tinnitus interferes with their ability to concentrate, relax and/or fall asleep, occasionally leading to depression or anxiety disorders.

Tinnitus sufferers are often told that there is nothing that can be done; that they must "learn to live with it." However, this simply isn't true. Several treatments claim to alleviate tinnitus, however, none have been found to be as effective as the *Neuromonics Tinnitus Treatment*. This FDA approved treatment uses a system that specially addresses

all of the underlying processes that result in tinnitus disturbance, namely the *auditory, attentional and emotional* aspects. These processes involve changes within the *auditory* system that lead to the initial tinnitus perception, the *attentional* filters in the brain that allow it to pay attention to tinnitus, and the *emotional* response to tinnitus. Due to a lack of auditory stimulation, the brain goes on 'high alert'. This results in internal sounds, such as tinnitus, being perceived as louder and increased sensitivity to external sounds, resulting in decreased sound tolerance. The brain pays attention to sounds that are novel; therefore, the tinnitus is brought to conscious attention. As sound is processed, it travels through the limbic system (your emotional drive system) before arriving at the auditory cortex. In the limbic system, an emotional response is attached to the sound; this response, with tinnitus, is often negative or aversive, leading to a 'fight or flight' stress response. In turn, the stress response leads to the disturbance from tinnitus, thus feeding this vicious cycle (tinnitus leads to stress and stress exacerbates tinnitus).

The *Neuromonics Tinnitus Treatment* is delivered via a compact medical device that looks similar to an MP3 player. The Treatment involves a two phase process. During the first phase, a broad frequency stimulus is embedded in relaxing music that is spectrally modified to the

individual's hearing loss. In this phase, a patient can expect a high degree of relief from their tinnitus. Because the music is pleasant and relaxing, the limbic system's negative reaction to the tinnitus is addressed. In phase two, the patient is exposed to their tinnitus for milliseconds at a time. It is during this stage that the brain begins to desensitize to the tinnitus sound.

Clinical outcomes are promising. A recent study found that 90% of tinnitus sufferers reported an average improvement of 65% after only two months of treatment. After six months of treatment, over 80% of patients had a level of tinnitus disturbance that was no longer clinically significant. Additionally, 95% of subjects stated that they found the treatment to be pleasant and would recommend it to others. The *Neuromonics Tinnitus Treatment* is only available through a certified Neuromonics provider. For more information on the treatment, visit www.neuromonics.com.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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