

SLEEP

METHODS OF IMPROVING YOUR SLEEP

If you are consistently missing out on sleep, the outcome will be more detrimental to your health than your tinnitus is. You might even be blaming your tinnitus for what might be something quite unrelated to your hearing damage.

Disturbance of normal sleeping patterns is referred to as insomnia. Delays in getting to sleep is the most obvious symptom, but waking too early in the morning, or waking during the night and having trouble going back to sleep are also forms of insomnia. In a milder form, there can be the feeling that your sleeping has not been as restful as you felt was needed.

Insomnia can have many possible causes, physical or emotional, and even a combination of the two. It can also be the symptom of a serious disorder, such as depression, so it is best to have your doctor rule out this possibility.

Tinnitus and Sleeping

Many people suspect that their tinnitus is loudest when they are in bed, trying to get to sleep. However, several studies have shown that the

actual loudness of tinnitus usually does not vary much during the entire day, but there are times when it appears more noticeable. At bedtime there is generally little environmental noise around to cover the tinnitus, and little else to occupy your attention with, and so it can be at its most intrusive then.

It is important to remember that your tinnitus in itself is unlikely to prevent you from sleeping well. It is the worrying about the tinnitus and the associated extra attention that can cause insomnia. It is usual for there to be several other factors actually underlying the sleeping difficulties; it is just that you have plenty of time to lie there and notice your tinnitus! Thus, there are many things that you can do to minimise the effect of tinnitus on your sleeping.

Using your Neuromonics Processor at bedtime may assist you in getting to sleep. The 'single' function on your Processor will automatically switch off the Processor after one track allowing you to drift off without worrying about switching it off.

General Sleep Hygiene

Practices that promote a good nights sleep are referred to as sleep hygiene.

Many poor sleep hygiene habits arise out of an initial short term sleeping problem. Quite common is the scenario where a period of emotional turmoil interferes with your ability to sleep, and the next day you feel insufficiently rested and tired. Then, you have many cups of tea in an attempt to stay alert during the day, and the excessive caffeine keeps you awake the next night!

As well as aggravating your tinnitus, and your ability to relax, excessive caffeine is well known to interfere with sleeping. Despite it being quite legal, it can still be stimulating you more than twelve hours after your last 'fix'. Caffeine is found in tea, coffee, cola drinks and many chocolates. While coffee generally has more caffeine than tea, it depends on how strong your favourite brew is.

Ideally you should try to give up caffeine altogether. Modern decaffeinated coffee and tea can taste just as good, while herbal teas and fruit juices

Tips for Sleep Hygiene

You may find some or all of the following helpful:

- Wake up at the same time every day even if you had a late night the night before
- Go to bed at around the same time every night
- Get regular exercise early in the day
- Keep the bedroom cool and use natural fibres for your bedding
- Take a warm shower or bath 2 hours prior to bed
- Try a hot drink (non-caffeinated) before going to bed
- Reduce the silence prior to falling asleep through the use of your Neuromonics Processor
- Carry out relaxing activities before bed such as meditation or listening to your Neuromonics Processor
- Gradually dim the lights from sundown and consider using candles in the bathroom and bedroom as you get ready for bed
- Avoid stimulants such as coffee, chocolate, nicotine for at least six hours before going to bed
- Avoid alcohol for at least four hours before going to bed.
- Avoid having a television in the bedroom and do not watch TV just before going to bed
- Assign a worry time dedicated to attend to daily concerns
- Avoid watching the clock
- Use of sleeping pills should be for short term purposes only

make wonderful substitutes.

If you currently have a big caffeine intake, you might need to cut back by one cup per day to prevent withdrawal symptoms like headaches and irritability. If you cannot bear the prospect of abstinence, at least try to limit yourself to a daily maximum of three cups of tea, or two cups of coffee, and nothing in the afternoon or evening.

Like caffeine, the nicotine in cigarettes can be a strong stimulant that is effective for many hours, and so can interfere with your sleep. There are many other compelling health reasons to give up smoking, and they probably do not need repeating here. Whatever your reasons might be to continue smoking, try to avoid smoking at least a few hours before bedtime.

Drinking a lot of alcohol in the evening might help you initially get off to sleep, but it tends to fragment sleep in the second half of the night. As well as feeling insufficiently rested, you could also wake up with a post - alcoholic hangover, and eventually a drinking problem as well. A much better substitute is a warm bath and a hot (not alcoholic or caffeinated) drink before bedtime.

Another reason why you might have difficulty sleeping is that your body simply is not tired enough. Regular exercise that is sufficient to cause sweating can

help promote sleep, as well as improving relaxation and well-being. Taking naps during the day can reduce your tiredness to the point where getting off to sleep at night is difficult. Attempting sleep before the time that your body is actually sleeping can also cause problems.

Worry Time

If the time you spend in bed whilst trying to sleep is filled with all sorts of worrying, you might benefit from the popular strategy of a worry time. This is a time you put aside each day dedicated solely to thinking about those issues that worry you. You can even write down these thoughts, and then write the possible solutions. Thus, whenever a worrying thought comes to you, especially while in bed, put aside the issue to address in your next worry time session. These sessions are best if not performed within a few hours of going to bed.

Sometimes the worrying can be solely about whether you will sleep properly that night, and this anxiety itself can keep you up!

Clock Watching

Lying in bed on a sleepless night you could find yourself glancing at the clock quite often, calculating the time spent in bed so far, how long you were actually sleeping, how many hours to go, and so on. This promotes more anxiety,

and even less chance of sleep. An easy solution is to turn away the clock face so it cannot be seen from the bed, and try to resist the temptation to cheat.

Sleeping Pills

Those with tinnitus and sleep disturbance who regularly take sleeping tablets might actually have three separate problems. Together these can have a snowballing effect.

Nearly all sleeping pills are designed for short term use only, and when taken for more than one month they can lose their effectiveness, and yet still become habit forming. Most sleep experts believe that medication can be useful in moderation for a short amount of time, but longer term use is likely to be counterproductive. Sleeping tablets usually only treat the symptoms of a sleeping disorder, and so while using them the causes might still remain unresolved.

If you have been using pills to sleep for a while, and have decided to stop or cut down, you will first need to consult your doctor for advice on how to do it. A sudden change in your dose of sleeping pills can cause withdrawal effects, particularly more problems in sleeping. There are several other medications that can interfere with your sleeping, and if you suspect something you are taking could be responsible, discuss it with the doctor who prescribed the medication.

Conclusion

In most of our endeavours in life, we have been taught to try hard in order to get what we want. Sleeping and relaxing are the

“Sometimes worrying you will sleep properly can be keeping you up”

exceptions. Rather than trying hard to get to sleep, just let it happen by its own accord, and facilitate the process by practising the good sleep hygiene listed above.

There are many things that you can do to ensure that your lifestyle is not making your tinnitus worse than it could be.

For more information about sleep disorders contact your local Doctor