



## How Tinnitus Affects Sleep

*by Adam Dawson*

If you're one of the 50 million Americans who suffer from tinnitus, you already know that sleeping can be difficult. Tinnitus contributes to sleeping problems, and sleeping problems contribute to tinnitus. If you don't address the problem, it can easily spiral out of control.

A 2013 study found that 54 percent of tinnitus sufferers also have a sleep disorder. That same study discovered that 30 percent of tinnitus sufferers had a sleep disorder and hyperacusis – a sensitivity to common, unusually sharp sounds like dogs barking or babies crying.

### **Why Is Tinnitus so Disruptive to Sleep?**

There is generally much more ambient noise during daytime as opposed to nighttime. Additionally, the mind is less busy in the evening than it is during the day. Because of this, people tend to be more aware of their tinnitus at bedtime.

There are also several individual tinnitus symptoms that can disrupt sleep. Symptoms like pain and stiffness, daytime fatigue, and depression and anxiety all negatively impact our ability to get proper rest.

The anxiety that tinnitus sufferers can experience at night is very real. The feeling of dread and hopelessness as bedtime approaches is common for many, including the restlessness that anxiety causes. It all contributes to a situation where getting a good night's sleep becomes less likely. But it doesn't have to be that way.

Improving your sleep is one key to great health, including relief for all those tinnitus symptoms. So, what are some ways to improve your chances of getting proper rest at night?

### **1. Introduce Background Noise**

If your bedroom is too quiet, you'll notice your tinnitus more than if it were a bit noisier.

Introducing background or white noises can help drown out symptoms. It's critical to pick sounds that are soothing to you; not just sounds that can mask the tinnitus.

There are many options here – white noise or ambient sound apps, music, a sound machine, recordings of waterfalls, ocean waves, chirping dolphins, or even a 10-hour YouTube video of a box fan.

## **2. Deep Breathing Exercises**

If tinnitus is negatively impacting your ability to sleep at night, you need to find a way to relax yourself before trying to fall asleep. Deep breathing has certainly proven to calm and relax.

One simple deep breathing exercise you can try before bed follows a count of 4-7-8. Four seconds of inhaling through your nose, followed by holding that breath for seven seconds, and then exhaling slowly through your mouth for a count of eight seconds. Hold your tongue up against the roof of your mouth as you do this. You may find that tongue position awkward on the exhale, but you'll quickly get the hang of it.

## **3. Meditation**

If deep breathing doesn't relax you, try some bedtime meditation. Meditation, in general, is great

for reducing stress and improving sleep. In fact, this 2017 study found mindfulness meditation to be effective at managing tinnitus.

There are several different ways to meditate. One of which is focusing on your breathing. Whenever your mind begins to stray, return your thoughts to your breath. Guided meditation is another method that may work better. There are even audio programs that, when delivered through headphones, can put your brain into the proper state to receive the greatest meditational benefits.

Tinnitus already takes away so much from you, so don't let it take away your sleep. By doing any or all of the above, you should see your sleep improve almost instantaneously. As a result, you will feel more rested during the day, giving you the energy you need to accomplish what you set out to do.

## **About the Author**

*Adam is the Digital Marketing Coordinator at e3 Diagnostics. His interest in hearing healthcare is driven by his passion for music because he feels everyone should be able to clearly listen to Pet Sounds at least once in their life. In his free time, he enjoys playing video games, digging through record stores for classic vinyl, shooting hoops, and writing stories.*