



NEWSLETTER

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MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN TINNITUS ASSOCIATION:

This Newsletter will be sent to all members on a regular basis as a way of informing them of the current status of our investigations concerning tinnitus.

So far there are about 95 members of the ATA. You constitute a very important group of people. You have contributed to a research effort and we hope you will encourage others to do likewise. It is also the case because each of you have tinnitus, that you form a group who have potentially valuable information about tinnitus.

In the near future each of you will receive a questionnaire.

We are attempting to collect as much information as we can regarding: probable causes of tinnitus, the different kinds of tinnitus, how long you have had it, things that help it, things that make it worse, general descriptions, duration, fluctuations, etc., etc. It is possible that some of you may have developed ways of handling your tinnitus which could be of help to others. When you receive the questionnaire, may I strongly urge you to complete it as soon as you receive it, and return to us.

RECENT INVESTIGATIONS:

We are currently exploring the idea that it might be possible to *mask* tinnitus sounds. Masking is something which is well known to each of you, although your experience with it may be limited to rather extreme situations. The most frequent experience one has with masking is the way in which loud noises interfere with the hearing of speech. In the presence of a lot of noise it is very difficult to understand normal conversation. We have all experienced such situations. That is a case of masking. We now want to determine

if some form of masking can be used as a way of reducing tinnitus. Clearly, however, it would do you no good to eliminate your tinnitus by the constant presence of yet another loud noise which may be just as unpleasant and just as disruptive as the tinnitus you now experience. On the other hand, if we can cause your tinnitus to be less loud or less disturbing by the addition of a second but non-noxious sound, then your tinnitus could be more easily tolerated.

Some of you have a tinnitus which is not only loud but also of a high (shrill) pitch. We have found that high-pitched tones can be effectively masked by still higher-pitched tones. To go into full detail here might provide more technical information than you want. The main thing we have found is that high-pitched tones can be reduced in loudness by masking and, furthermore, the reduction can easily be as great as 10 times. In that particular masking situation the individual hears *two* (not one) tones but the combined loudness of the two tones is *10 times less* than the single tone.

It has long been known that low-pitched tones can be masked. Such tones however are not the usual description of tinnitus, but it does occur. In any event, we take these findings about masking to be sufficiently encouraging to warrant further investigations into masking as a way of producing relief for some kinds of tinnitus. It is also our belief that while these findings are encouraging, they are not nearly enough. They do not, for example, do anything to *cure* tinnitus, and that is our ultimate goal.

A SIMPLE TEST:

I would like to ask each of you to conduct a simple test on your own tinnitus and report the outcome to me. The test is as follows:

- (1) Arrange a situation in either a kitchen or bathroom where you can attend very closely to your tinnitus without distraction, other sounds, or interruptions.
- (2) While carefully attending to your tinnitus, turn-on full force a water faucet.
- (3) Now, turn the faucet off and on several times.
- (4) Answer the questions on the self-addressed card.



This cat's name is Zinger. She is an outpatient at the University of Oregon Health Sciences Center because she has tinnitus. Her tinnitus is the rare objective type. That is, we can hear Zinger's tinnitus by placing our ear near hers. The tinnitus sound emitted by Zinger is a relatively pure high-pitched tone of about 4,000 Hertz. The cause of Zinger's tinnitus is not known.

At birth she had it in both ears and now (about a year later) it is only in her right ear. Zinger's tinnitus appears to cause her no discomfort or problems; however, she was shunned by her littermates shortly after birth.

Some humans have been known to have objective tinnitus.

This test may appear overly simple to you but the fact is that running water creates a complex sound composed of many different frequencies which in turn produces an effective masker. May I urge each of you to conduct this simple test, perhaps several times, and inform me of the results regardless of the outcome. Your help will provide valuable information for the investigators of this affliction at the Kresge Hearing Research Laboratory, located at the University of Oregon Health Sciences Center in Portland, Oregon.

I would like to thank you for your contributions to ATA and to ask you for your continued support. Best personal regards.

*Jack Vernon, Ph.D., Director
Kresge Hearing Research Laboratory*

If you know of others who would be interested in receiving the ATA Newsletter, please let us know by dropping us a line and giving their names and addresses.

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