TINNITUS AND HYPERACUSIS PROGRAM

The University of Maryland has been helping individuals with tinnitus and hyperacusis since 1991. The goal of the University of Maryland Tinnitus and Hyperacusis Program is to evaluate, diagnose, and treat your tinnitus and/or hyperacusis so that it will no longer be a problem for you.

It has been our experience that the majority of individuals coming to our program for an initial consultation experience relief from their tinnitus by learning about tinnitus and ways to cope with it. Consequently, we have re-structured the program so that all individuals start with this education in a shared medical appointment (Stage 1 appointment) prior to an individual consultation. The Stage 1 appointment covers the origins of tinnitus, the neurophysiological model which explains the relationship between hearing sensitivity, emotional responses to sound and conditioned reflexes, coping strategies and treatment options. All patients attending the appointment should have medical clearance from an otolaryngologist (a.k.a. Ear, Nose and Throat physician) because it is important that a medically-treatable condition has been ruled out prior to managing tinnitus from a non-medical perspective. In addition, an audiological evaluation is necessary to provide information about your hearing status.

The charge for the Stage 1 appointment is $100 and is payable when you check in. We encourage you to bring up to two family members and/or friends to the session; having people close to you understand the problem can help you cope with tinnitus. Please be advised that this is a shared medical appointment and will include up to 11 other patients and their accompanying family/friends; generally, the number of people attending the Stage 1 appointment ranges from 3 to 10. This appointment is not intended to treat your individual problem, but to provide you with information to help you with your problem. This appointment also is not a support group. You will receive a take-home packet of information that is discussed during the appointment, as well as strategies to help with tinnitus and hyperacusis.

What to bring:

___ Statement of medical clearance from an ENT (not essential for Stage 1 but required for Stage 2)
___ Copy of recent audiological evaluation
___ Completed Tinnitus Handicap Inventory questionnaire
___ Completed Tinnitus History
___ Signed “Notice to Patient / Non-Covered Services”
___ Payment for the session (payable by check or credit card)

You may mail your information ahead of time to the address below (to the attention of the “Tinnitus and Hyperacusis Program”) or fax to 443-462-3037.

16 S. Eutaw St., Suite 400 ♦ Baltimore, MD 21201 ♦ (410) 328-5947
After you attend the Stage 1 appointment, you may decide to return for an individual consultation. This consultation with an audiologist includes a comprehensive audiological evaluation (if one has not been completed within six months or test results are not made available at the time of the consultation), measurement of otoacoustic emissions (when indicated), a complete tinnitus and hyperacusis assessment, a review of the education about tinnitus and/or hyperacusis as it relates to your individual problem and information about intervention options. Please note that while test procedures are generally covered by insurance, the individual tinnitus consultation with the audiologist is generally not a covered service and must be paid at the time of service. The charge for the individual consultation is $150. Upon completion of the individual consultation, options for treatment will be discussed and may include the use of ear-level sound generators, hearing aids, or the Neuromonics tinnitus treatment device. Decisions about which treatment plan is best for you will be made jointly by you and the audiologist.

Continuity of care is essential for achieving and sustaining management of tinnitus and hyperacusis. There is a specific protocol for follow-up care depending on the treatment selected. Treatment length depends on the treatment selected and ranges from six months to 24 months.

NOTE: Depending upon the type of insurance coverage you have, some components of the program may be non-covered services. If your carrier does not cover some or all of the services, you are responsible for payment at the time of service.

To make an appointment for the Stage 1 shared medical appointment, or for an individual Stage 2 consultation (following participation in the Stage 1 appointment), call 410-328-5947. If you have questions about the program, please e-mail tinnitus@smail.umaryland.edu.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**How do you treat tinnitus?**

Our treatment options include sound therapy using ear-level sound generators, the *Neuromonics Tinnitus Treatment* system or hearing aids. In conjunction with sound therapy, you will be seen for office visits to monitor your progress; review information covered in the group session and verify appropriate device use and function. Sound therapy does not involve surgery or medications.

**How does sound therapy help?**

We try to retrain the subconscious parts of the brain to ignore (i.e., habituate) the sound of tinnitus and to achieve a state in which you are not aware of or annoyed by your tinnitus.

**Are there any side effects of the treatment?**

There are no negative side effects.

**What is done during the follow-up office visits?**

The purpose of the follow-up office visits is to monitor changes in your perception of tinnitus awareness and annoyance or disturbance and your self-perceived tinnitus/hyperacusis handicap. Device output is monitored to ensure proper function and use. Ongoing education will provide you with information about the causes and factors involved in your tinnitus/hyperacusis, explain to you how the sound therapy works, and teach you how to control your tinnitus. The follow-up visits are a fundamental part of the treatment process. Family members or friends are welcome to participate in these appointments.
What are the devices and what do they look like?

The ear-level sound generators used in sound therapy are small instruments that are worn behind both ears. They look similar to miniature behind-the-ear hearing aids and can be worn with glasses. They should not interfere with your work or talking on the telephone. They are designed to be worn for a short period of time (1-2 years) until the tinnitus and/or hyperacusis is/are no longer an issue in your life.

Can I just buy the sound generators or the Neuromonics device?

The devices are used to help speed up the process of retraining, but what is important is how they are used. The manner in which the devices are used depends on each patient’s individual needs. If you just buy and wear the devices you likely will not achieve improvement, and in some cases you may even hurt yourself. We will teach you how to use them effectively.

Do I need to have sound generators, Neuromonics or hearing aids?

Not everybody needs formal sound therapy. After the individual consultation we will give you our recommendations and you can choose your method of intervention.

I am using hearing aids; how can I use other devices?

Depending on the type of hearing aids, it is possible that we can work with your hearing aids and you will not need any other devices.

I was using maskers without effect. What is the difference between masking and these devices?

Although in some cases masking can provide tinnitus relief, tinnitus masking is aimed at making tinnitus inaudible. However, the level of sound required to mask the tinnitus may be uncomfortable. When the maskers are removed the tinnitus returns. With habituation therapy, the sound generators, Neuromonics or hearing aids are used to generate or amplify sound, not to cover the sound of tinnitus. The goal of habituation therapy is to retrain the brain so that it eventually does not pick up the tinnitus sound, and in order to do this the tinnitus sound should not be covered. Generating sound that mixes with your tinnitus will help you feel more comfortable and remove the emotional response to tinnitus, and then the perception of tinnitus itself so that it is no longer heard.

I am taking some medications. Will I be able to continue?

A medical evaluation will provide the answer to this question. In general, if you are taking medication for any other reason than tinnitus, you will be able to continue taking the medication.

How long does the treatment take?

Depending on the treatment selected, the treatment takes up to 12 – 24 months. If you carefully follow the protocol, you should see an improvement within half a year.

Will I be cured? What is the guarantee that I get better?

You will no longer be bothered or annoyed by your tinnitus. However, if you concentrate and want to hear your tinnitus, you will. Tinnitus treatment is an intervention, not a cure. There is no guarantee, but from our experience about 80% of our patients have reported significant improvement.

How frequently do I need to return to the THP?

Routine follow-up visits are scheduled according to protocol. The follow-up protocol varies depending on the treatment selected (e.g., every three months for sound generators).