

Your tinnitus appointment

Audiology Department

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Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please contact the PALS desk on 01271 314090 or at rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net.

Who will I see for my tinnitus appointment and how long will my appointment take?

You will see an audiologist specialised in tinnitus counselling, who has an extensive knowledge of tinnitus and strategies to help manage it. We offer a modern therapeutic approach and use a range of techniques designed to investigate and improve this condition.

Please contact the department if you require any specific communication support, mobility aid or other relevant assistance for this appointment. You are welcome to attend with a partner, carer or significant other.

Our reception hours are 8.30am – 5pm Monday to Friday.

The appointment will last between **60 to 90 minutes**.

What is tinnitus?

Tinnitus is classified as the perception of sound that does not come from an external source. Each patient will describe their tinnitus differently, with sounds that might include ringing, buzzing, humming, hissing, rushing, whining, clicking, droning. Tinnitus can also be rhythmical; either in time with a person's pulse or at a faster or slower pace. This is known as pulsatile tinnitus or might be described as objective tinnitus. Tinnitus can sound like it is in one ear, both ears or within the head. Every person with tinnitus has their own very personal experience. The specialist you see will work with you to better understand your experience and formulate an effective plan to manage your tinnitus.

What can I expect from my tinnitus appointment?

It is important that your ears are completely clear of wax for this appointment. Advice on how to do this is included in your appointment letter. If you have any questions during the appointment, please ask us at any point.

The specialist audiologist will take a detailed history about your tinnitus and a thorough hearing assessment will be undertaken if it hasn't previously. You can expect to be asked some detailed questions to help build a picture of the impact that tinnitus has on your life. In addition, a questionnaire will be sent out with your appointment designed to help contribute towards personalised treatment plan.

Questions you may be asked include:

- What does your tinnitus sound like?
- Is it continual or intermittent?
- How long have you been experiencing these sounds?
- Were there any significant things going on in your life when you first noticed it?
- How does your tinnitus impact or intrude on aspects such as concentration and sleep?
- What coping strategies do you already use?

By asking questions like these, the tinnitus specialist can help you build a treatment plan, in terms of what might be the best strategies for helping manage your tinnitus. These questions also help to explore views that you have about your tinnitus and whether these are realistic and helpful.

Tinnitus therapy looks at the way the brain is involved in this perception of sound. It is important to see the relationship between the physical, mental and emotional impact of tinnitus and how this can help people improve their tinnitus, by learning to take control through self-help strategies to improve the perception of tinnitus and in turn the emotional reaction to it.

The therapy prescribed will depend on your needs and the cause of the tinnitus. Understanding and having some information about your tinnitus is the first step towards effectively managing it. For some people, simply knowing why they have tinnitus is all that is needed to reduce anxiety levels and actually help improve the perception of the tinnitus.

The specialist audiologist may suggest trying digital hearing aids, if a hearing loss has been detected. Our current hearing aids have the capability to be white noise generators as well, allowing both hearing amplification and tinnitus sound support which may be beneficial with the desensitisation process.

In some cases, the specialist may order further tests, such as an MRI scan, to better understand what is causing your tinnitus. Similarly, your specialist might suggest other services and departments that may be useful to visit to best manage your tinnitus.

Will I receive any follow-up care?

Follow up appointments will be made as and when required. Generally, you will be seen again by the specialist audiologist either three or six months following your initial appointment. The purpose of a follow up appointment is to monitor the success of the initial treatment plan and address any residual concerns you might have about your tinnitus and adapt the coping strategies if necessary. If you were given hearing aids, we will also ensure these are of benefit and ask you some questions about the improvement they have made.

When you no longer require support, we will either discharge you, or if you have hearing aids you will have an open access appointment.

What will happen to the results of my appointment?

A report including your hearing test results, a discussion about your tinnitus and treatment plan will be sent to your GP. You will automatically receive a copy of this report, unless you decline. If you require any further tests or onward referral, a letter will be sent explaining the reason for the referral. A brief record of the main points of discussion, test results and treatment plan will be stored in your audiology records.

Further information

For further information about tinnitus, visit:
www.tinnitus.org.uk

How to contact us?

If you have any queries about your appointment or problems as a result of the test/procedure or about your hearing aid(s), then you can contact the Audiology Department between 8am and 5pm, Monday to Friday or by email.

If you're unable to attend your appointment then please contact us immediately.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

Tell us about your experience of our services. Share your feedback on the Care Opinion website www.careopinion.org.uk.

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