

Support for veterans with hearing loss or tinnitus



A national charity since 1911

Introduction

Action on Hearing Loss is the UK's national charity supporting people with deafness, tinnitus and hearing loss. We support and encourage people to take control of their lives, campaign for change and fund research to find a cure.

During the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, we are working hard to continue to help and support everyone who needs us. It's estimated that 300,000¹ ex-service personnel in the UK are living with hearing loss or tinnitus and we want to support our veterans and their families by sharing information on managing hearing loss and tinnitus, getting the most out of hearing aids, as well as providing information on technology available and signposting to further support.

This pack contains information on hearing loss and tinnitus which we hope will be useful in pointing you in the right direction for getting the support you need with managing hearing loss or tinnitus. Throughout this information pack there are links to further information on our website and contact details for our Information Line and Tinnitus Helpline who you can contact for any information in relation to hearing loss and tinnitus.

What is hearing loss?

There are different causes of hearing loss, including ageing, exposure to loud noise, genetics and ear conditions. Age related hearing loss is the single biggest cause of hearing loss and this results in a gradual reduction in an ability to hear, which makes high-frequency sounds, such as some voices, difficult to hear. Hearing loss caused by exposure to noise, often means a dip in hearing in the high frequencies. This means being unable to hear high-pitched sounds as well as sounds at lower pitches.

There are some common signs of hearing loss to look out for:

- Do you turn up the TV louder than your family wants it?
- Do you find it hard to follow conversations in noisy environments?
- Do you struggle to hear on the phone?
- Do you often ask people to repeat what they say?

To find out more about the causes, types and signs of hearing loss, follow this link to further information on our website

<https://actiononhearingloss.org.uk/information-and-support/hearing-loss/>

Getting your hearing checked

If you think you may have a hearing loss and need a hearing test, your GP can refer you to a NHS audiology service for a test or you can get your hearing tested privately.

Most audiology services were put on hold during the coronavirus outbreak, this included non-urgent hearing tests. We know many providers are now trying to resume face to face appointments where they can. There is a lot of variation across the UK and it is likely there will be longer waiting times for these appointments. Our Information Line will be able to help you to find further information on the situation in your area.

If you suddenly lose hearing in one or both ears, you should contact NHS 111 or your GP as soon as possible. You could also visit your nearest urgent treatment centre.

For further information <https://actiononhearingloss.org.uk/information-and-support/hearing-loss/getting-your-hearing-tested/>

Hearing aids

If you've been diagnosed with hearing loss, hearing aids could help you to hear better and communicate more confidently. Hearing aids come in different shapes and sizes, but all work in a similar way. They use microphones to pick up noises and adjust the sounds digitally. You can get hearing aids free from the NHS or buy them from a private audiology service.

If you already have hearing aids and need new hearing aid batteries or tubing during the coronavirus outbreak, you may be able to get these from your hearing aid provider. Most NHS audiology departments and private clinics have a postal service for hearing aid batteries and tubing. Contact your hearing aid provider to find out more about this service. If you have trouble contacting your provider, you can contact our Information Line. We can help you find the information for who to contact as well as directing towards other sources of help such as videos which how to change batteries in your hearing aids.

For further information on hearing aids <https://actiononhearingloss.org.uk/information-and-support/hearing-loss/hearing-aids/>

What is tinnitus?

Tinnitus is a noise in one or both ears that has no external source. People describe their tinnitus in lots of different ways e.g. ringing, buzzing, whistling or a range of other sounds. Tinnitus is very common and affects 1 in 8 adults across the UK of all ages. At the moment, there is no cure for tinnitus, however, there are different strategies that can be adopted to manage it including tinnitus retraining therapy, counselling, relaxation techniques as well as support from tinnitus clinics and support groups. If you have tinnitus, your first step is to see your GP and you can contact our Tinnitus Helpline for any information relating to tinnitus:

- **Call** 0808 808 6666 (freephone)
- **Text message** 07800 000360 (text message only)
- **Email** tinnitushelpline@hearingloss.org.uk
- **Write to us** Tinnitus Helpline, Action on Hearing Loss, 9 Bakewell Road, Orton Southgate, Peterborough, PE2 6XU

Further information on tinnitus is also available on our website <https://actiononhearingloss.org.uk/information-and-support/tinnitus/>

Support, practical aids and tips

Communication

You can find a copy of our communication tips leaflet together with further information on communication and other useful information on living with hearing loss on our website <https://actiononhearingloss.org.uk/information-and-support/hearing-loss/living-with-hearing-loss/>

New regulations on wearing face coverings have been introduced in the UK to reduce the spread of coronavirus. Many of the 12 million people who are deaf or have hearing loss in the UK rely on facial expressions and lipreading to communicate. We've been working with the UK governments to make sure the new regulations consider the needs of people who rely on visual cues to communicate.

Our website and Information Line have information on how the regulation affect people with hearing loss and when exemptions to the regulations apply <https://actiononhearingloss.org.uk/coronavirus-response/face-coverings-how-the-regulations-apply-to-you/>

In these times of shielding and social distancing, there are a range of remote communication tools which can be used such as Relay UK and speech-to-text apps – contact our Information Line for further information or visit our website <https://actiononhearingloss.org.uk/information-and-support/technology-and-products/>

Practical aids

There are also a wide range of products which can help with daily living including:

- Amplified phones (landlines and mobile)
- Personal/conversation listeners
- TV listeners
- Tinnitus aids
- Flashing doorbells
- Vibrating fire alarms, alarm clocks, and baby monitors

Our Information Line can provide you with further information on the range of equipment and where to purchase them or visit our website <https://actiononhearingloss.org.uk/information-and-support/technology-and-products/>

Benefits

Veterans may be entitled to benefits in the form of the War Pensions Scheme, administered by Veterans UK on behalf of the Ministry of Defence. If you're a widow or widower of a war pensioner you may also be eligible for a War Widow's or Widower's Pension – contact Veterans UK to find out more.

Veterans UK helpline, Veterans UK, Ministry of Defence, Norcross, Thornton Cleveleys, FY5 3WP

Email: veterans-uk@mod.gov.uk

Freephone (UK only): 0808 1914 2 18

Further information on these schemes as well as other benefits are available on our website. There are also a range of organisations who provide free advice on benefits including Citizens Advice citizensadvice.org.uk

Mental health and wellbeing

In these trying times, looking after our mental health and wellbeing is more important than ever. You may be feeling more anxious or worried because of the coronavirus outbreak. It's important to look after yourself at this time.

There is information and advice online with tips and simple steps you can take to look after your wellbeing and mental health. There are also helplines you can contact if you are worried about anything and would like to speak to someone.

Our website has details of organisations who provide support and information on mental health and wellbeing and Veterans Gateway can provide details of organisations providing veteran focused information, advice and support.

Veterans Gateway **Call** 0808 802 1212 **Text** 801212 |

<https://www.veteransgateway.org.uk/about/>

<https://actiononhearingloss.org.uk/coronavirus-response/looking-after-your-mental-health-and-wellbeing-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/>

How we can help

We hope you have found this information pack useful. We're here for you during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. If you have any queries on hearing loss or tinnitus, please contact us. Our Information Line and a team of information staff across the UK are available to support you.

- **Call** 0808 808 0123
- **Text message** 0780 000 0360
- **Email** information@hearingloss.org.uk
- **Website** www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk
- **Relay UK** 18001 then 0808 808 0123
- **Textphone** 0808 808 9000
- **Write** Information Line, Action on Hearing Loss, 9 Bakewell Road, Orton Southgate, Peterborough, PE2 6XU