

INTERNAL USE ONLY - RNIDNY Tinnitus Cribsheet

This internal guide is intended to support conversations with service users about tinnitus. Use it as a quick reference to help you respond clearly and confidently. The examples below show how to discuss tinnitus in a supportive and informative way.

Frequent Enquiries (and example responses, but don't feel bound to them!)

I've had buzzing/ringing/whistling/shushing/whirring noise, is it tinnitus?

That sounds a bit unsettling, especially if you're not sure what it is. Tinnitus can sound like anything - so it might be - but I wouldn't be able to say for certain, but a GP or audiology service would be able to look into that with you. If it helps, I can share some general information or help you with what to do next.

My tinnitus is waking me up in the night and I can't get back to sleep after.

That sounds tough, everything feels more challenging when your sleep is affected. A lot of people find tinnitus more noticeable at night as it's so quiet, so you're not alone in that. There is some helpful information about sleep and tinnitus I can point you to, if that would be useful.

My tinnitus is drowning out people speaking/I can't hear people over it.

That sounds frustrating, especially when it's getting in the way of conversations. Sometimes tinnitus can make listening feel more difficult, especially when it's connected to hearing loss. It might be worth speaking to an audiology service, as they can investigate that with you.

My tinnitus is affecting my mental health/upsetting me/distressing to live with.

I'm really sorry to hear that - it sounds like it's been a lot to deal with. There is support out there, and it might help to speak to a GP or audiology service about how they can support you. I can also share some resources, such as our tinnitus guide, if that would be helpful.

I just go home when my tinnitus gets too much (it is causing social isolation).

That sounds difficult, especially if it stops you from doing things you'd normally enjoy. There may be some support that could help you feel a bit more comfortable in those situations. Our tinnitus guide has got some practical tips that you may find helpful. Make sure you chat to your GP if it's feeling too much to handle by yourself, they can refer you to support services.

My tinnitus is making me dizzy/disorientated/connected to other symptoms.

I'm not able to advise on that, but it would be important to speak to a GP or audiology service so they can check it properly. I can help you find the right service if that is useful.

My tinnitus has felt much worse recently. Does this mean it will always be this bad?

A recent increase does not necessarily mean it will stay this way, it may settle and become manageable again with the right support. It would be a good idea to speak to a healthcare professional about the change you've noticed. I can also share some information if that would help.

As a volunteer, you do not need to have all the answers, your role is to:

- **Listen** and provide a supportive space for conversation
- **Acknowledge** the person's experience and concerns
- **Signpost** to appropriate support and services, share trusted resources

You are not expected to:

- Diagnose tinnitus or other conditions
- Provide medical or personalised advice including recommending specific treatments, therapies, or products (even if they've worked for you)
- Explain complex tinnitus theories or mechanisms
- Take responsibility for solving the person's difficulties

Starting the Conversation – If Someone Mentions Tinnitus

- How long have you been experiencing this?
- What has your experience been like so far?
- What do you know about tinnitus already?

These questions can help you understand the person's concerns and tailor the conversation accordingly.

Key Messages About Tinnitus

- Tinnitus is experienced differently by different people
- Tinnitus is not fully understood
- People can and do find ways to live well with tinnitus
- What helps varies from person to person
- Support and information are available

When to Encourage Someone to Seek Medical Advice

Signpost to a GP or audiology service if:

- Symptoms are new, have developed suddenly or changed significantly
- They are reporting dizziness/balance problems or other associated or worsening symptoms
- They are asking for medical advice or diagnosis
- They are very distressed