Sound Therapy Devices Could Ease Tinnitus Symptoms

Special gadgets placed in the ears of patients suffering from chronic ringing may provide relief from the noise.

January 23, 2018 By Alicia Green

Sound therapy is commonly used to treat tinnitus, a false perception of noise and ringing in the ears. Now, new findings published in the American Journal of Audiology suggest that wearing a sound-emitting device in the ear during sleep may train the brain to ignore this recurring problem, reports Reuters.

For the study, investigators randomly assigned 60 patients with tinnitus to sleep with one of three sound therapy devices: a customized in-ear device that played sounds matched to the ringing sounds patients typically heard; an in-ear device that allowed patients to select a preset sound; or a bedside noise machine.

Scientists found that individuals' average reaction to tinnitus and perception of noise improved across all groups following three months of treatment. What's more, those in the group that used the customized in-ear device experienced a greater reduction in the loudness of the noises they heard compared with the other groups.

But researchers noted several limitations of the study: the lack of a control group of patients who didn't receive sound therapy, no direct comparison of sound therapy with other treatments for tinnitus and the inability to objectively measure whether sound therapy reduced the racket caused by tinnitus.

Jennifer Derebery, MD, an expert not involved in the study, advises those with tinnitus to visit a doctor to determine whether there is an underlying reason for its occurrence. Potential causes of the annoying clamor in the ear include grinding the teeth at night or certain medications, such as aspirin or anti-inflammatory drugs.

Derebery also recommends that patients with mild to moderate tinnitus who have trouble sleeping play some sound in their room at night.

Click here to learn more about tinnitus.

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