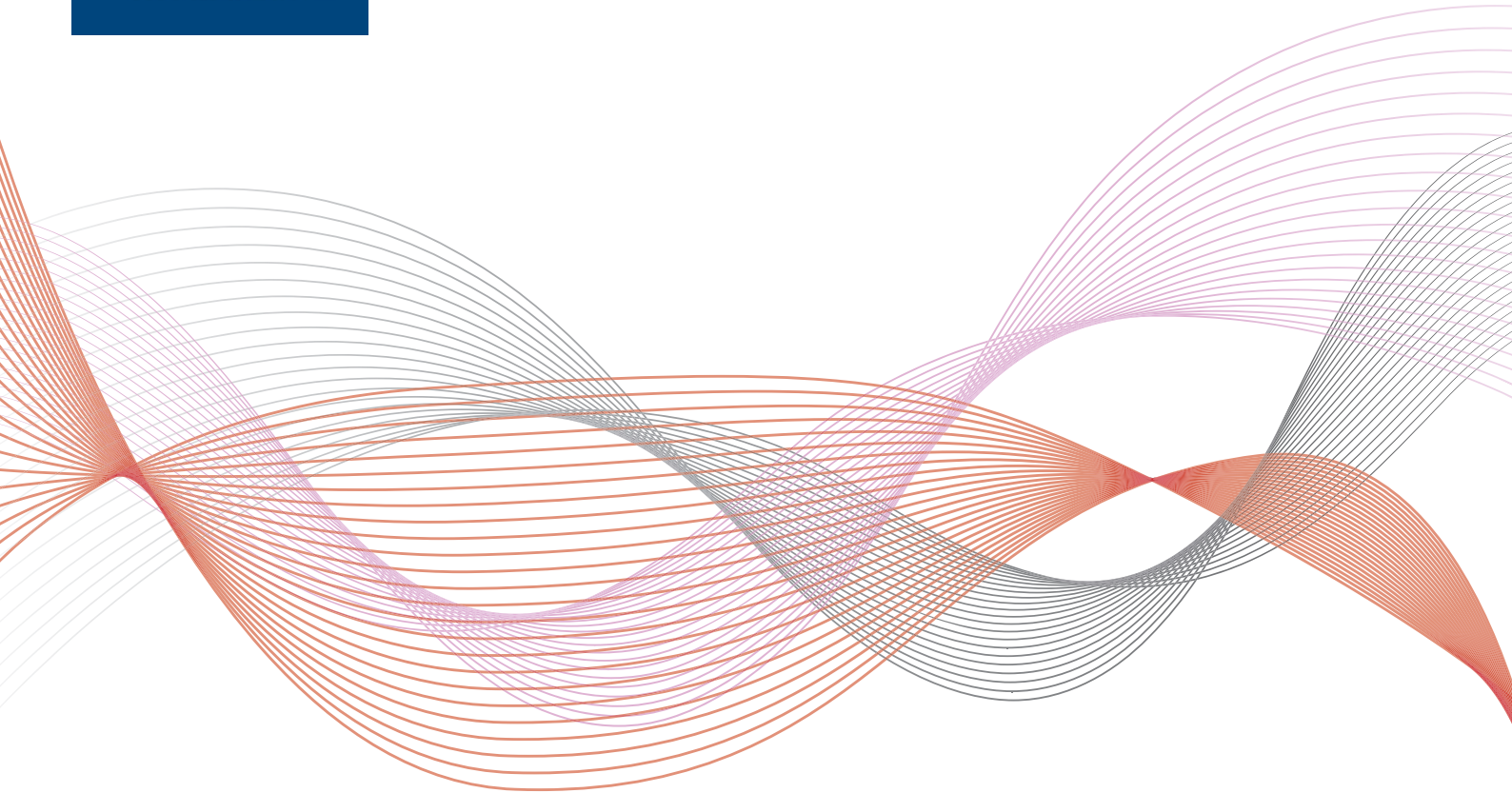




Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry & Health Sciences

# Melbourne Audiology & Speech Pathology Clinic



## Tinnitus

### WHAT IS TINNITUS?

Tinnitus is the ability to hear an internal sound in the ears or head without an external source. Many people describe these sounds as a ringing or hiss, but it can also sound like an ocean roar, clicking, rhythmic pulses or even musical tones. Studies have shown that each individual experiences their tinnitus differently; what makes your tinnitus better or worse may not necessarily be the same for others. With the help of an Audiologist you can work towards finding solutions to manage your tinnitus.

### WHO GETS IT?

The World Health Organisation estimates that 278 million people world-wide have tinnitus, however, studies have shown that almost everybody would hear some sort of internal noise when placed in a sound proof room. Unlike a fleeting ringing that is heard from time to time, or after a loud night out, chronic tinnitus lasts for more than 6 months. For roughly 5% of the population this can cause distress, impact

sleep, concentration, mood and quality of life. Tinnitus management is crucial to addressing these symptoms and starts with the reassurance found in diagnosis.

### WHAT IS IT?

There are many things that can both influence and cause tinnitus. For some it could be jaw or neck pain, psychological distress, wax blockage in the ears or a side-effect of medication. For most however, it is a change in the way we process sounds. As we get older our bodies sustain some general wear and tear, and the ear is no exception. If signals from the ear to the brain become less than perfect, the brain will sometimes 'turn' up the volume internally to compensate. The result of this can be greater awareness of internal sounds from your body. More often than not, the ability to hear tinnitus doesn't cause concern, however, if we label the sound as a bad or threatening, we can subconsciously pay it more attention. This leads us to worry about the sound, focus on it more and eventually, worsen it rather than help.



## WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Tinnitus management requires individualised care tailored to your needs and lifestyle. Best management will often start with a hearing test by a specialised audiologist. Your audiologist may also refer you on to other clinicians to assist with diagnosis and management. Such professionals will often include Ear Nose and Throat specialists, Psychologist, Physiotherapists and Dentists. These are all areas known to help support diagnosis and the management of tinnitus, and will be referred to when clinically indicated. At the University of Melbourne we take on a holistic approach to your auditory care and acknowledge that the best outcomes for you may be found within a team approach rather than one individual.

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