

Audiology

Tinnitus - Using a White Noise Generator (WNG) for Hyperacusis



Introduction

Hyperacusis is associated with an increase in sensitivity in the auditory system and research shows that this can be influenced by anxiety, stress or depression. You have been given White Noise Generators (WNG) as you have hyperacusis in one or both ears. The WNG is a device worn over the ear with a thin tube going into the ear which plays white noise. White noise is a random flat noise and sounds just like a radio when out of tune. They can be used as a form of sound therapy to reduce the sensitivity in the auditory system.

Using the WNG

You may be more aware of hyperacusis in one ear, however, ideally you should wear white noise generators in both ears. You start by listening to a very low level of noise for a very short time. You gradually increase the length of time that you wear the sound generators, until you have been using them quite comfortably for six hours a day without any problems.

You'll then need to slightly increase the volume. The new sound level shouldn't cause any problems, though you may need time to adjust to it. Again, when you can easily tolerate the new sound level, you should increase the volume. This gradual increase in volume will help to improve your ability to tolerate different environments in everyday life.



Patient Information

There's no set volume level that you must reach, but when you can tolerate all the typical noise situations with the generators on, there's no need to continue to increase the volume. At this point, you can reduce your reliance on the generators to mask noise, either by gradually lowering the volume level, or by reducing the hours you wear them for.

Only when you can clearly cope in all circumstances without your sound generators is the process complete and your brain's 'volume control' mechanism reset.

How long will it take?

Some people find that auditory desensitisation gives them initial relief, but it typically takes 12–18 months for most people to find a long-term improvement without the need to use noise generators.

Important Note:

If you have hyperacusis it is essential that you do not use ear plugs to try and block out sound. This may seem like a logical thing to do but because the auditory system has less access to sound, it searches for it and this can increase sensitivity.

Controls on your WNG:

- Your WNG takes orange hearing aid batteries and will only fit into the device one way. The compartment is opened from the bottom of the device and closed once the battery is inserted.
- On/off is operated by the battery compartment on the back of the device.
- The volume control is on the back of the WNG and is a toggle switch. When the device is turned on the volume is at the middle level and from there you can turn the sound up by 5 steps or down by 5 steps. Each time this is done you should hear a quick beep to indicate a change has been made.
- Make sure you keep the dome that goes into your ear as clean as possible by wiping over this with a baby wipe/antibacterial wipe or a slightly damp tissue. If the tube becomes blocked, please contact the department.

Patient Information

Contact details

If you need any further information or batteries please contact:

Centre for Hearing and Balance Disorders (Audiology)

Outpatients Clinic 8

University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire

Coventry CV2 2DX

Telephone: 024 7696 6444

Email: audiology.correspondence@uhcw.nhs.uk

Further Information on hyperacusis can be found on the websites below:

Royal National Institute of Deaf People (RNID): <https://rnid.org.uk>

The British Tinnitus Association: www.tinnitus.org.uk

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