



THE FREE GUIDE

Quieting the Ring

How to find real tinnitus relief —
from an audiologist who has it too.

Dr. Joy C. Hooter, Au.D.

Doctor of Audiology · Waco, Texas



INSIDE: 7 THINGS YOU CAN DO TONIGHT · THE TREATMENTS WITH REAL EVIDENCE ·
YOUR SELF-CHECK

FROM THE DOCTOR

I hear it too.



Dr. Joy has lived with tinnitus since 2011.

I hear a ring every single day. Right now, as I write this, it's there — a high, thin tone that never fully goes away.

I'm a Doctor of Audiology, and I also have tinnitus. Mine started in 2011 at a concert in a small, loud venue. I stood near the stage and speakers and left with a cotton feeling in my ears. My hearing came back after about three days. The ringing never left.

Here's what I've learned as both a patient and a clinician: **tinnitus can get much easier to live with.** The brain can learn to turn down its attention to the sound — and there are proven ways to help.

This guide gives you the straight answers I wish I'd had on day one. No miracle cures, no supplements to sell. Just what works, what doesn't, and when to get help.

You're not alone in this. I'm right here with you.

Joy Hooter

DR. JOY C. HOOTER, AU.D.

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What tinnitus really is



A symptom, not a disease — and a sound the brain can learn to tune out.

THE COCHLEA, WHERE HEARING BEGINS

Tinnitus is hearing a sound with no outside source — ringing, buzzing, hissing, humming or clicking.

Most often it's the brain's response to reduced input from the ear. When tiny hair cells in the inner ear are damaged, the brain "turns up the volume" to compensate. That extra activity is what you hear — and because it lives in how the brain processes sound, **the brain can also learn to tune it out.**

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U.S. adults reported tinnitus in the past year.

Bhatt et al., JAMA Otolaryngology

COMMON CAUSES

Noise

Concerts, tools, firearms, loud work

Age

Gradual hearing loss after midlife

Earwax

Simple to remove, often helps

Medications

Some drugs list tinnitus as a side effect

Jaw & neck

TMJ and muscle tension

Stress & sleep

Rarely the cause, often an amplifier

02 *Myths that keep people stuck*

The biggest myth is "nothing can be done." Plenty can — it just isn't a pill.

MYTH

"Just learn to live with it."

TRUTH

Counseling, sound therapy, hearing aids and CBT help most people feel significantly better.

MYTH

"Tinnitus means I'm going deaf."

TRUTH

It often comes with some hearing loss, but it doesn't cause deafness.

MYTH

"A supplement will cure it."

TRUTH

Research reviews find no reliable benefit from zinc, ginkgo or "tinnitus formulas."

MYTH

"Silence will help it heal."

TRUTH

Silence usually makes it seem louder. Gentle background sound helps.

MYTH

"This sound means something is being damaged."

TRUTH

Tinnitus is real to you, but it can't hurt you. You can't treat the sound itself — you can turn down how much it bothers you.

WHAT OFTEN MAKES IT SPIKE



Loud noise without protection, stress, poor sleep, long periods of total quiet — and for some people, caffeine or alcohol.



"Tinnitus can't hurt you. You can take control of it instead of letting it control you."

— DR. JOY

Seven things you can do tonight

- 1 **Never sit in silence**
A fan, soft music or nature sounds, just below the level of your tinnitus. My go-to: ocean waves or brown noise.
- 2 **Protect your ears**
Earplugs at concerts and with power tools. Keep earbuds under 60% volume.
- 3 **Guard your sleep**
A set bedtime, a cool dark room, no caffeine after lunch and no scrolling before bed.
- 4 **Calm your nervous system**
Five minutes of slow breathing or a short walk can lower how loud it feels.
- 5 **Notice your triggers**
Track caffeine, alcohol, stress and noise for two weeks. Change only what matters.
- 6 **Shift your attention**
Absorbing hobbies and conversation teach your brain the sound is unimportant.
- 7 **Get a hearing test**
Even mild hearing loss can drive tinnitus — and treating it is one of the best steps you can take.

04 *Treatments with real evidence*

Counseling and cognitive behavioral therapy are the only treatments recommended by every major guideline that reviewed them. Other options help many people — especially combined.

START HERE

Education & counseling

Understanding tinnitus makes it feel less threatening — and that alone lowers distress.

STRONGEST EVIDENCE

Cognitive behavioral therapy

Changes how you react to the sound so it matters less. Few or no side effects.

WITH HEARING LOSS

Hearing aids

Restore missing sound so the brain stops turning up the volume. Many have built-in relief sounds.

FOR SLEEP & QUIET

Sound therapy

Gentle background sound softens the contrast between silence and the ring.

LONG-TERM

Tinnitus retraining therapy

Counseling plus sound over months, helping the brain file tinnitus as unimportant.

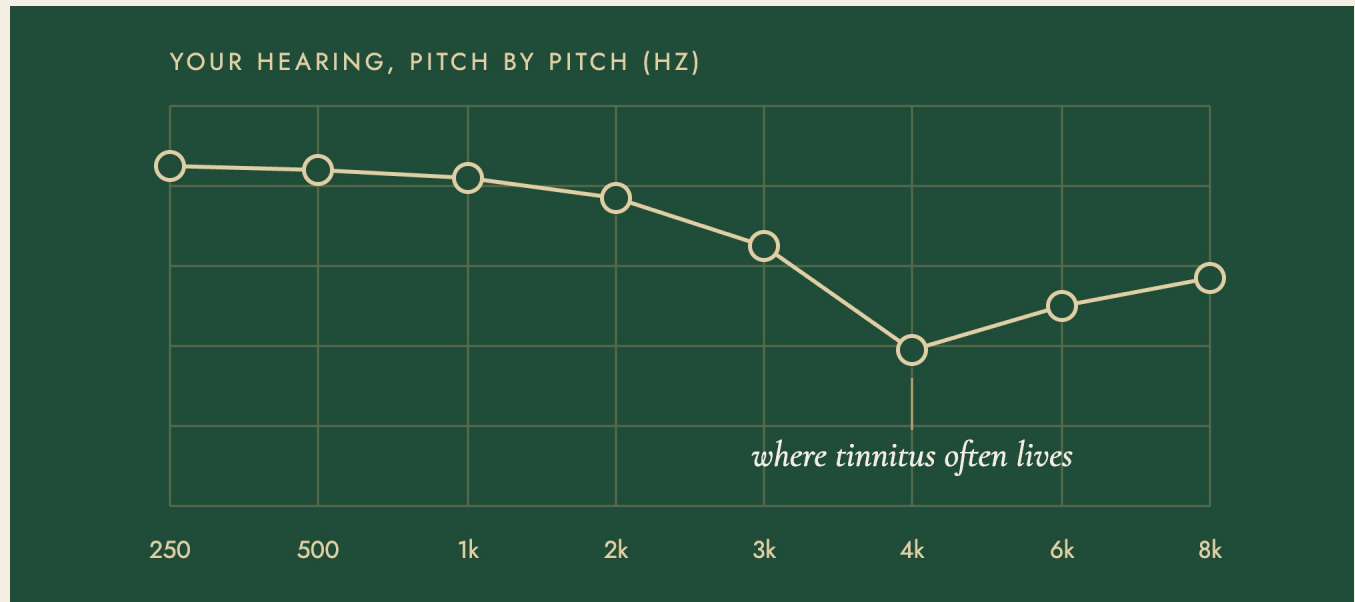
EVERY DAY

Healthy habits

Sleep, hydration, exercise and calm routines help turn down the volume over time.

What to skip

Supplements like zinc show no reliable benefit, and guidelines advise against routine medication for tinnitus itself. No treatment works for everyone — an audiologist can match the right mix to you.



05 When to see an audiologist

Tinnitus for more than a week, trouble sleeping, or hearing changes? Book an evaluation.

GET CARE RIGHT AWAY IF YOU NOTICE

Sudden hearing loss — an emergency; see a doctor within 72 hours

Tinnitus in only one ear

A pulsing sound in time with your heartbeat

Dizziness, vertigo or balance problems

Ear pain, drainage, or tinnitus after a head injury

YOUR VISIT AT HOOTER HEARING

- i. A conversation about your history and triggers
- ii. A complete hearing test
- iii. Tinnitus pitch and loudness matching
- iv. A personal plan — clear options, no pressure

Feeling hopeless or unable to cope? Call or text **988**, the U.S. Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, any time.

PRINT · CHECK · BRING TO YOUR VISIT

Your tinnitus self-check

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ It has lasted longer than one week | ☐ It's louder in quiet rooms |
| ☐ It makes falling or staying asleep hard | ☐ I turn up the TV or ask people to repeat |
| ☐ It makes concentrating hard | ☐ It's in one ear, or pulses with my heartbeat |
| ☐ I feel anxious, irritable or down because of it | ☐ Nothing I've tried on my own has helped |

2+ Checked two or more? A tinnitus evaluation is a smart next step.

Trigger log

PRINT TWO COPIES FOR TWO WEEKS

Day	Tinnitus 0–10	Sleep (hrs)	Stress 0–10	Caffeine / alcohol	Noise
Mon					
Tue					
Wed					
Thu					
Fri					
Sat					
Sun					

A TINNITUS EVALUATION

Explore your options

Sit down with Dr. Joy for a tinnitus evaluation and leave with a plan that fits your life.

- What's likely driving your tinnitus
- A complete hearing evaluation
- Clear options, with no pressure

EXPLORE YOUR OPTIONS



THE HOOTER HEARING TEAM

"I hear a ring every day, too. You're not alone in this — and you can feel better."

— DR. JOY C. HOOTER, A.U.D.

CALL

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Dr. Joy C. Hooter, Au.D.

DOCTOR OF AUDIOLOGY · FOUNDER, HOOTER
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Dr. Joy Hooter is a Doctor of Audiology and the founder of Hooter Hearing in Waco, Texas. In 11 years of practice she has helped hundreds of tinnitus patients — and she has lived with tinnitus herself since 2011.

She earned her B.A. in Communication Sciences and Disorders from Baylor University and her Doctor of Audiology from the University of Washington. She is a Fellow of the American Academy of Audiology, ASHA certified, and board certified by the American Board of Audiology, an optional advanced credential renewed with continuing education each year.

She and her husband, Jacob, met at Baylor and, after years of travel, came home to Waco. They have two daughters, ages 10 and 3, and are active in their church. She's an avid hiker who recently crossed the Grand Canyon rim to rim in a single day.

MEDICAL DISCLAIMER

This guide is for general education and is not a substitute for a personal medical evaluation. Talk with a qualified hearing or healthcare professional about your symptoms.

SOURCES

Bhatt et al., JAMA Otolaryngology (2016) · Stegeman et al., BMJ Open (2023), review of tinnitus guidelines · Tinnitus guideline evidence table, PMC (2024)



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