

Hearing Loss and Tinnitus in the Dental Profession

Research shows that Dentists are 50% more likely to suffer from tinnitus and hearing loss compared to the general population. This is largely due to certain occupational risks, such as the use of high-speed dental handpieces and repeated noise exposure.

As a symptom found to be present in roughly 1 in 5 American adults, tinnitus is one of the most common hearing conditions. Approximately 50 million Americans experience tinnitus, 90% of which also report having hearing loss.

Tinnitus is described as the regular presence of buzzing, ringing, or rattling sounds, even when there is no external source causing these sounds to occur. When left untreated, the effects of tinnitus can worsen over time and may even lead to mental health complications.

Fortunately, there are quite a few things that dentists can do to help treat and prevent occupational hearing conditions like tinnitus. In this guide, we will discuss a few important facts dentists need to know about tinnitus and hearing loss, plus offer a few prevention tips.

How Dentists Can Recognize and Treat Tinnitus

The earlier a dentist can recognize the onset of tinnitus, the more likely they will be able to address the symptoms before they get any worse. If you have heard buzzing, ringing, or rattling noises in your ears—even when there is no external source of noise present—then you are likely experiencing tinnitus.

If tinnitus persists for multiple days, you should consider scheduling an appointment with an audiologist or hearing center. Your audiologist will be able to suggest possible treatment options and also provide useful advice for prevention. Before your visit to the audiologist, take a moment to identify the situations where your tinnitus is the most unbearable (during work, using certain tools, etc.).

How Dentists Can Prevent Tinnitus and Hearing Loss

There are quite a few ways dentists can protect themselves against tinnitus, hearing loss and other hearing conditions. One of the easiest ways to protect your hearing and decrease the harm of exposure to dental equipment is to use ear protection when using handpieces, drills, suction equipment, or ultrasonic devices.

Custom earplugs for dentists can easily be purchased at a qualified hearing center. For those suffering from tinnitus, specialized treatments such as sound therapy may also be recommended. Upon your first visit to a hearing center, you will be able to receive hearing tests and answer a series of questions, allowing your audiologist to develop a tailored hearing treatment that effectively addresses your needs.

** The above content was taken from "*Safety/Ergo Tips: Hearing Loss*". developed through OSHA's Alliance Program as a product of the OSHA and ADA Science and Research Alliance. It's intended for informational purposes only and does not endorse any specific company or brand.
