



Covid-19 and Tinnitus

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Why in News

New research has found that **Tinnitus** is being exacerbated by **Covid-19** and also by the measures being taken to fight the infection.

The research was led by Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) in the UK, with support from the British Tinnitus Association and the American Tinnitus Association.

Key Points

- The research covered 3,103 people with tinnitus from 48 countries, mostly from the UK and the USA.

Tinnitus is a common condition that **causes the perception of noise or ringing in the ears and head.**

- It found that 40% of those **displaying symptoms of Covid-19** simultaneously experience a **worsening of their tinnitus.**
- A small number of participants reported that **their tinnitus condition was initially triggered by developing Covid-19** symptoms. This suggests that **tinnitus could be a Covid symptom** in some cases.
- A large proportion of people believe their **tinnitus is being made worse by social distancing measures.**

As many as 46% of UK respondents said that lifestyle changes had negatively impacted their tinnitus, compared to 29% in North America.

- In **another study** published in BMJ Case Reports, researchers stated **the possible ways through which Covid -19 can affect hearing.**
 - The presence of **ACE-2** human **receptors** that **SARS-CoV-2** binds with. The receptor was recently found to be expressed in the epithelial cells in the middle ear of mice.
 - Another way that could affect hearing is through the immune **system response to the infection.** In this case, the **inflammatory responses and an increase in cytokines** due to infection could lead to hearing loss in case there is direct entry into the cochlea leading to inflammation and cell stress.
 - The **cochlea** contains the sensory organ of hearing.
 - **Cytokines** are inflammatory immunological proteins that are there to fight off infections and ward off cancers.
- Earlier, Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) specialists have noted a growing number of patients with **anosmia (the abrupt loss of smell)** and **ageusia (loss of sense of taste).** Both **anosmia and ageusia could be signs of Covid-19** in people who otherwise appear well.

Tinnitus

- Tinnitus is the perception of **noise or ringing in the ears.**
- Tinnitus **isn't a condition itself** — it's a symptom of an underlying condition, such as age-related hearing loss, ear injury or a circulatory system disorder.
- Tinnitus can significantly **affect quality of life.** One may experience fatigue, stress, sleep problems, trouble concentrating, memory problems, depression, anxiety and irritability, etc.
- Although it can worsen with age, for many people, tinnitus can improve with treatment. Treating an identified underlying cause sometimes helps. Other treatments reduce or mask the noise, making tinnitus less noticeable.
- **Treatments** may include **hearing aids, sound-masking devices, medicines, and ways to learn how to cope with the noise.**

Source:IE