

# Tick in man's ear gives him tinnitus

September 21 2012, by Randy Dotinga, Healthday Reporter

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European report tells tale of insect attached to eardrum.

(HealthDay)—When a 63-year-old man went to a hospital in Switzerland to report a buzzing in his ear, the staff got more than they bargained for when they looked inside. A tick was attached to his eardrum, and it possibly got there with the help of a friendly feline.

The man is fine now that the [tick](#) has been removed, according to a brief report in the Sept. 20 issue of the [New England Journal of Medicine](#). While it's uncommon for ticks to make their way into the [ear canal](#), emergency physicians say insects do make appearances in this fragile orifice.

"Insects in the ear are relatively common so this case is not very surprising," said Dr. Donald Keamy Jr., a pediatric otolaryngologist—ear, nose and throat doctor—at Massachusetts Eye and

Ear Infirmary. "A case report like this is likely one of many other cases that were not reported."

The report said the man visited a hospital in Bern, Switzerland, while suffering from itching and "bubbling tinnitus," a kind of buzzing, in the ear. "Technically, this is not the typical high-pitched noise that is heard by patients with hearing loss," said Keamy, who was not involved with the case.

An evaluation of his right ear revealed that a tick had attached itself to the [eardrum](#). The tick had probably caused the buzzing sound through its contact with the eardrum, Keamy explained.

The tick species is a type that's often found on cats in Europe.

The hospital removed the tick by numbing the man's ear and then using a [suction device](#) to suck it out. The tick can spread [Lyme disease](#), but tests later revealed that the man didn't get infected; he recovered without further problems.

How did a tick manage to get in the man's ear in the first place? "On review," the report stated, "the patient remembered having had close contact with his domestic cat the evening before the symptoms began."

Keamy said the tick could have bitten the man inside his ear, but probably wouldn't have caused [permanent damage](#).

Dr. Michael Lanigan, an attending physician in emergency medicine at SUNY Downstate Medical Center in New York City, offered this advice for people who live in or visit places where ticks live: "The best way to prevent tick-borne disease is to check yourself and others—particularly your children—for ticks frequently."

Keamy added that it's smart to wear long-sleeved clothing while you're in wooded areas where ticks live. Treating your dog or cat to keep ticks at bay is another good idea, he said. "If you believe you have had a tick bite," he said, "see your primary care physician to discuss possible antibiotic treatment."

**More information:** For more on [tick bites](#), visit the U.S. National Library of Medicine.

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