

Mindfulness—a new treatment for tinnitus

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A randomized controlled trial published in the current issue of *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics* discloses the effectiveness of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy as a treatment for chronic tinnitus. Tinnitus is experienced by up to 15% of the population and can lead to significant disability and distress. There is rarely a medical or surgical target and psychological therapies are recommended.

Authors investigated whether [mindfulness-based cognitive therapy](#) could offer an effective new therapy for tinnitus. This single-site [randomized controlled trial](#) compared mindfulness-based cognitive therapy to intensive relaxation training (RT) for chronic, distressing tinnitus in adults. Both treatments involved 8 weekly, 120-min sessions focused on either relaxation (RT) or mindfulness-based cognitive therapy. Assessments were completed at baseline and at treatment commencement 8 weeks later. The primary outcomes were tinnitus severity (Tinnitus Questionnaire) and psychological [distress](#) (Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation—Non-Risk, CORE-NR), 16 weeks after baseline.

A total of 75 patients were randomly allocated to mindfulness-based cognitive therapy ($n = 39$) or RT ($n = 36$). Both groups showed significant reductions in tinnitus severity and loudness, psychological distress, anxiety, depression, and disability. Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy led to a significantly greater reduction in tinnitus severity than RT. Effects persisted 6 months later, with a mean difference of 7.2 (95% CI 2.1-2.3, $p = 0.006$) and a standardized effect size of 0.56 (95% CI 0.16-0.96). Treatment was effective regardless of initial tinnitus severity, duration, or hearing loss.

These findings show that mindfulness-based cognitive therapy is effective in reducing tinnitus severity in [chronic tinnitus](#) patients compared to intensive RT. It also reduces [psychological distress](#) and disability. Future studies should explore the generalizability of this approach and how outcome relates to different aspects of the intervention.

More information: Laurence McKenna et al. Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy as a Treatment for Chronic Tinnitus: A Randomized Controlled Trial, *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics* (2017). [DOI: 10.1159/000478267](https://doi.org/10.1159/000478267)

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