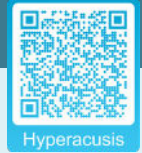


# HYPERACUSIS



## WHAT IS HYPERACUSIS?

Dynamic range is the ability of the ear to deal with quick shifts in sound loudness. Suddenly everyday noises sound unbearably or painfully loud. The disorder is often chronic and usually accompanied by tinnitus, but can occur in patients who have little or no measurable hearing loss.

**Hyperacusis** differs from recruitment, which is an abnormal growth in the perception of loudness accompanied with hearing loss. With recruitment, loud noises are uncomfortable. With hyperacusis, all sounds are too loud. Most patients also experience inner ear pain or a feeling of fullness (pressure) in the ears. Hyperacusis can be devastating to the patient's career, relationships, and peace of mind. Finding the proper diagnosis is difficult because few doctors understand hyperacusis.

Imagine a baby cries or a truck screeches its brakes to a halt and the sound is intolerable. What has happened to my ears? A person who has hyperacusis can't simply get up and walk away from noise. Instead, the volume on the whole world seems stuck on high. Hyperacusis is a collapsed tolerance to normal environmental sounds. Ears lose most of their dynamic range.

## A LIFE ALTERING CONDITION

Hyperacusis makes living in the noisy 20th century difficult and dramatically changes the patient's pattern of life. Moving about, traveling, and communicating with others is challenging. Ear protection such as earplugs and industrial earmuffs must be worn in areas that seem too loud. Many activities may be eliminated from daily life to protect the ears. This may seem unordinary; however, one may still have trouble listening to a vacuum, hammer, power tool, or motorcycle. Additionally, daily life including a career consists of some level of noise. Hyperacusis may worsen or accompany tinnitus.

## SYMPTOMS

Symptoms for hyperacusis may be:

- ▶ Sensitivity or difficulty tolerating everyday sounds such as running water, traffic, shuffling papers, and much more.
- ▶ Pain or discomfort with sounds

## CAUSES

Hyperacusis affects people of all ages and can occur on one or both ears. A few causes may be:

- ▶ Autoimmune disorders
- ▶ Autism
- ▶ Damage to the cochlea by exposure to loud noise
- ▶ Head injury
- ▶ Bell's palsy
- ▶ Ear damage
- ▶ Emotional stress
- ▶ Ménière's disease
- ▶ Multiple sclerosis