

HYPERACUSIS – SOUND SENSITIVITY

Most importantly - don't beat yourself up for being "too sensitive". This is a medical disorder that results from injury and disease. It may get better with time. For now, find a way to cope.

BLOCK THE SOUND

- Disposable earplugs: when you need silence. Try several different brands of disposables. A good deal is the Stanley bulk pack – 200 pairs for around \$22
- Acoustic filter earplugs: let some noise through
- Fitted earplugs can be made that allow some sound through and they are great for work. It is possible to reduce noise of a particular pitch, i.e. medium-high to high
- Sound cancellation headphones
- Earbuds with music or white noise

ASK FOR SUPPORT

- Let your family/workmates know how sensitive you are to sounds, accenting the aspect of it being a medical condition. Start with someone in your life who is supportive
- Less understanding people may use this knowledge to annoy you, so approach this carefully
- Have this conversation when noise levels are down and you are more relaxed; it will be easier than during a noisy event while you are stressed
- Ask if others can warn you before making loud noises
- If you have gotten upset about noises someone has made, apologize, and explain you are finding ways to cope and you would like their help if possible

OTHER THINGS TO CHECK

- Check your dental health - hearing shares the same nerves as jaws so an infected molar can affect your hearing perception
- Practice relaxation for the neck/upper shoulder area. Constant tense muscles in this location can affect hearing perception and reaction to noises
- Assess your life to see if you are permanently stressed. Being in a constant state of anxiety increases reaction to unpleasant noise*
- Take up a relaxation technique - you need this to deal with the stress hyperacusis causes.
- Some people have found improvement by removing dairy or wheat from their diet. This might work by reducing physical stress caused by food sensitivities

*Some professionals recommend not blocking sound too often, suggesting that it will increase sensitivity. Other say that the psychological stress caused by hyperacusis will increase the sensitivity, creating a vicious cycle. It's a chicken/egg situation... perhaps give yourself lots of relief from earplugs/headphones at first then you can slowly decrease the amount of time you need to protect your hearing.