

Tinnitus SA

Tinnitus and flying or underwater diving

Flying or diving may impact your tinnitus. Understanding what happens to your ears when you fly or dive and knowing how to minimise the risks will help you to enjoy these activities.

The middle ear is normally filled with air that is the same pressure as the surrounding air. The air in the middle ear is absorbed by the body and when we swallow or yawn the Eustachian tube (connecting the middle ear with the back of the nose) opens and lets air pass into the middle ear, equalising the pressure.

If you are worried about your Eustachian tube function please contact your audiologist and they can easily test your Eustachian tube function through tympanometry.

How pressure affects your ears when you fly

If there is going to be a problem with equalising pressure when flying, it usually occurs when the plane is descending to land. The air in the middle ear is at a lower pressure than that of the cabin and if the Eustachian tube becomes blocked the ear drum will be pulled inward resulting in discomfort. This doesn't usually result in damage to the middle ear or ear drum and usually the Eustachian tube will clear after a short time, but it can be painful. (This is especially common for babies and young children).

Minimise the risks when flying

The Eustachian tubes do not open effectively when you are asleep, so make sure you are awake during the descent.

Keep swallowing at regular intervals to clear the ear. Sipping water, sucking on a lolly or chewing bubble gum may also help; or try an exaggerated yawn.

Avoid flying with a cold or with advice from your doctor, use decongestant drops or spray before and during the flight.

Use 'Earplanes' earplugs which may help to modify the effects of pressure changes in the aircraft cabin. These come in both child and adult sizes and are available from chemists and travel goods shops.

Pressure changes from flying may impact on a person's tinnitus by changing the loudness and pitch of the tinnitus but these changes are generally only temporary. Some people also find the cabin noise aggravates their tinnitus for short time. 'Earplanes' plugs may help to exclude unwanted noise as well as modifying air pressure changes.

For further information please read the article 'Flying and the ear' by the British Tinnitus Association: <http://www.tinnitus.org.uk/flying-and-the-ear>

About Tinnitus SA

Tinnitus SA is a web based tinnitus information service designed to provide awareness, factsheets and information about management options for people with tinnitus and health professionals alike. Tinnitus SA services are provided by non-profit South Australian Audiology business Can:Do Hearing on behalf of the South Australian Government.

tinnitussa.com.au



Tinnitus SA
Lightens the load

Tinnitus SA

Tinnitus and flying or underwater diving

How pressure affects your ears during underwater diving

When diving, tinnitus can be a symptom of serious changes to the auditory system that have occurred because of the effects of underwater pressure. There are many types of ear injuries which can cause this.

Middle Ear Squeeze is when a person's Eustachian tube doesn't clear after they come up from a dive. It may cause them to feel dizzy and their ears feel full or blocked.

Alternobaric Vertigo occurs when the middle ear on one side of a person's head clears more easily than the other side and can result in the pressure in one ear being different from the other. A person will start to feel like they are spinning and may become disorientated and vomit. This is very dangerous if it happens while a person is on a dive.

Barotrauma occurs when a person fails to equalise the air pressure in their middle ear/s. This usually occurs where the higher pressure in the external ear bruises the eardrum or makes it rupture.

Decompression Sickness is where bubbles of gas form in a person's body as they ascend from a dive. This may form in the hearing or balance system. Deafness, tinnitus, nystagmus, dizziness and vomiting can be symptoms of this illness.

Minimise the risks when underwater diving

Don't go underwater diving if you can't clear your ears. This may happen if you have a cold and your Eustachian tubes are not functioning as well as they should. To clear the ears use the val salva manoeuvre. Take a small breath, close your mouth, pinch the nose closed between your finger and thumb and gently try to blow air out the nose.

If you experience tinnitus after diving, consult an Audiologist, GP or ENT for further assessment.

For further information please contact an audiologist, GP or ENT & read the article by scuba-doc on tinnitus: <http://www.scuba-doc.com/entprobs.html#Tinnitus>



Can:Do Hearing

Contact Us

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