

Tinnitus

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According to Ayurveda, tinnitus is not a disease but a symptom of *prana vayu* disturbance. *Prana vayu* is a *subdosha* of *vata* which resides in the head and governs all higher cerebral functions, including swallowing and the inspiratory phase of respiration. If tinnitus goes untreated, other symptoms of *prana vayu* disturbance may follow, including anxiety, fear, nervousness, sleep disorder, tics, tremors, and stuttering. There may be other symptoms of *vata* disturbance in the ear, specifically dried ear wax, pain, and deafness.

Treatment

Nasya

Vacha (*Acorus calamus*) oil *nasya*, has a powerful effect in calming and balancing the *prana vayu*. To obtain the maximum effect at the head (the seat of *prana vayu*), and to circumvent any side effects of hyperacidity or nausea which occasionally occur when *vacha* is ingested, *vacha* is used in this case as a nasal medication. A preparation of sesame oil medicated with calamus root is taken nasally, five drops per nostril, at night and in the morning. The *nasya* should be warmed to blood heat before administration.

Massage

Foot massage, wherein the soles of the feet are massaged with warm sesame oil, has a specific effect in calming the *prana vayu*. At bedtime, warm sesame oil should be applied to the soles of the feet and also to the scalp. This treatment rapidly normalizes the *prana vayu*.

Eardrops

To calm the *vata* in the ears, ten drops of warm sesame oil is applied daily to each ear. The oil is allowed to remain in the first ear for five or ten minutes, then that ear is cleaned, and the same procedure is followed with the other ear, with the patient lying on the other side. Typically, this treatment should alleviate tinnitus, and most other symptoms of *prana vayu* disturbance, within eight to ten days.

Botanicals

Oral administration of *sarasvati churna* can be given in doses of a quarter teaspoon twice daily after meals. Since it contains *vacha*, *sarasvati churna* should not be used in pregnancy, bleeding disorder or peptic ulcer.

Lifestyle Changes

Consumption of caffeine, nicotine, or cocaine can disturb the *prana vayu* leading to tinnitus, as can excess television watching, excess use of computers, or sleeping near an electrical outlet. Lifestyle adjustments are thus an essential part of the effective treatment of tinnitus.

Tinnitus and Kundalini

Tinnitus, a warning symptom of disturbed *prana vayu*, should be carefully distinguished from perceptible *nad*, an indicator of active *kundalini*. The *nad*, or cosmic sound current, can be perceived only when our normally dormant potential energy, known in Ayurveda as *kundalini shakti*, the 'serpent power', is awakened. Practitioners who are unaware of or unfamiliar with this phenomenon may present to their physician complaining of tinnitus, when in fact they have begun to experience the *nad*. The following qualities distinguish perceptible *nad* from tinnitus:

1. *Nad* is heard only in the right ear.
2. The sound typically resembles the buzzing of a bee, the ringing of Tibetan bells, singing bowls, or other musical instrument.
3. The sound usually heralds or accompanies an altered state of consciousness.

The treatments for tinnitus will neither help nor harm a person experiencing perceptible *nad*. In fact, oiling the soles of the feet and the scalp, the ears, and the nose, are beneficial preventative measures for anyone. However, it will be extremely helpful for the person experiencing this phenomenon to understand that, far from being a warning symptom of some imbalance, ringing ears due to *nad* are a positive sign of spiritual progress.

In summary, tinnitus is a symptom of *prana vayu* imbalance. If it goes untreated, more serious symptoms may result. Warm oil and *vata*-soothing herbs are most valuable in the treatment, and may be administered locally in the ears, nasally, and orally. Tinnitus should be carefully distinguished from *kundalini* phenomenon.

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