



# SORRY, CAN YOU REPEAT THAT?



Are your friends and family complaining of having to repeat themselves, or that you have the TV turned up too loud? A loss or reduction in your hearing can be caused by a number of different reasons. Shahnaz Fraser of Spire Norwich Hospital looks into the causes of hearing loss and the problems associated with it with Consultant Ear, Nose and Throat Surgeon Mr John Phillips.

**M**r Phillips holds private clinics at the Colney-based private hospital and gives me some insight into some of the reasons behind hearing loss.

### Ear wax

A build-up of wax can be painful, as well as affecting your hearing. Never try to remove wax yourself with a cotton bud, or anything else, as this can push the wax further into the ear and cause damage. If you suspect you have a build-up of wax, olive oil will soften it so that it comes away more easily. If necessary, wax can be easily removed using microsuction. This is a technique whereby a small 'vacuum cleaner' is used to Hoover up the wax.

### Glue ear

Glue ear is a build-up of fluid in the middle ear, which mostly affects young children, although adults can suffer with it too. You mostly notice a reduction in hearing, but it can also be uncomfortable and be associated with an echoing feeling when you talk. It may be necessary to perform a small procedure to drain the fluid and insert small tubes called grommets into the ear. Glue ear can also be linked to problems with swollen adenoids (the tissues at the back of the nose), which are sometimes removed at the same time as the grommets are inserted. Your GP will be able to see if glue ear is present and will refer you for further investigation and audiometry tests if necessary.

### Tinnitus

It is estimated that around six million people in the UK suffer with tinnitus\* - an ongoing sound in one or both ears. It is often a consequence of hearing loss and can disrupt concentration and sleep. Often it is just plain annoying. Tinnitus is usually caused by hearing loss, so investigation of the cause of the hearing loss and then treatment of the hearing loss is a sensible initial step.



A number of different causes can lead to hearing problems

Picture: GETTY IMAGES

There are many other causes of tinnitus that can be due to other abnormalities in the head and neck. It is important to understand that tinnitus is common and that nowadays much can be done to improve people's quality of life. This is very much dependent on the cause of the tinnitus and what aspects of their tinnitus cause particular upset.

### Blocked ears

Blocked ears can be caused by a malfunction of the eustachian tubes, which connect the back of the nose to the middle ear. Blocked ears can be painful and can sometimes cause popping sounds from within the ear or tinnitus. GPs can prescribe treatments that help solve the problem for the majority of cases. In resistant cases, it is important to confirm the cause of blocked ears and to arrange any further specific tests.

### Vertigo

No, not just the feeling you get standing on top of a high

mountain! Vertigo is the sensation that you, or the environment around you is spinning. It can be associated with hearing problems and the other symptoms mentioned above. It can come on suddenly, and is very upsetting to experience, as well as causing nausea and affecting daily life.

It's a symptom, rather than a cause and the possible causes may be unrelated to the ears. Your GP can look into the cause of your vertigo and if necessary, arrange some specialist scans, such as a CT or MRI. Complex cases often require referral to a consultant specialist in the appropriate field.

Frequent dizziness that involves a spinning or movement sensation often comes from problems within the inner ear. One of the most common causes of vertigo from the ear is Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (BPPV). BPPV can be treated by using a specific sequence of head movements that reposition loose material within the inner ear chambers. This can be administered by your GP

or an ENT consultant.

Mr Phillips concludes: "Ear problems are common, but fortunately, once the cause has been found, there are a wealth of treatments to resolve the situation."

If you are suffering from hearing loss or any of these ear-related issues see your family GP in the first instance. For further information about ENT services at Spire Norwich Hospital call 01603 255 614. Or visit [spirenorwich.com](http://spirenorwich.com) and search ENT treatments.

All surgery carries an element of risk and the content of this page is provided for general information only. It should not be treated as a substitute for the professional medical advice of your doctor or other healthcare professional.

\*source [tinnitus.org.uk](http://tinnitus.org.uk)

[www.facebook.com/spirenorwichhospital.com](https://www.facebook.com/spirenorwichhospital.com)

## ASK THE SPECIALIST

Consultant Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon, Andrew Snelling offers advice on excessive sweating.



Can you offer any advice to help with excessive sweating? On some days during this hot weather I have had to change my top three times because of wet patches under my arms. It's embarrassing and no amount of deodorant seems to help.

Normal sweat production helps us to lose heat when it is too hot or after exercise. It's produced from sweat glands distributed all over the body. However, a proportion of the population suffers from excessive sweating at other times, either from armpits or from their palms, known as hyperhidrosis. This can be worsened by anxiety or hot weather. We don't know what causes this tendency, but it can run in the family.

As you know, excessive sweating can cause social embarrassment and can also leave stains on clothes. Generally speaking, standard antiperspirants are ineffective, but they can help to mask any odour. Stronger antiperspirants are available, which may help - although for some people they don't always work, can irritate the skin and stain clothing.

A variety of other treatments are available and it is best to consult your GP in the first instance. Medication is also available, but generally the side effects of these, such as dry mouth and constipation mean they are not well tolerated.

An effective treatment for excessive armpit sweating is Botox®. We most commonly associate Botox® with facial rejuvenation as it works by paralyzing the muscles that create frown lines. A similar principle is applied to treat excessive sweating. Botox® is injected with a fine needle directly into the armpit and works by blocking the nerve that 'switches on' the sweat gland.

It takes a couple of weeks to reach full effect and lasts between six and 12 months. It has not been found to cause 'compensatory' sweating in other parts of the body. It is suitable for the vast majority of patients, should always be administered by a qualified plastic surgeon and you should not have this treatment if you might be pregnant. There are no particular restrictions after treatment, although strenuous exercise should be avoided for 48 hours.

For further information on cosmetic surgery visit [Spire Norwich Hospital's website www.spirenorwich.com](http://Spire Norwich Hospital's website www.spirenorwich.com) Or call 01603 255 614 to make a private appointment with Mr Andrew Snelling, Consultant Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon.

Do you have a health question? Please send any questions into Ask the Specialist, Helen Harper, Spire Norwich Hospital, Old Watton Road, Colney, Norwich NR4 7TD. Questions will be handled with discretion and you will remain anonymous. Specialists cannot enter into direct correspondence.

## Health worry? Why wait...



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