

Misophonia in young people

Information for young people and parents/carers

What is misophonia?

Sound sensitivities can cause different levels of distress and discomfort when someone hears certain sounds. It can be normal to dislike some sounds; however, some young people report a reaction towards sounds that trigger extreme **anger**, **disgust** and **aggression**. These sounds are often human sounds such as breathing, chewing, coughing or throat clearing – although other quiet sounds such as pen tapping can also cause these reactions. Your reaction will be more impulsive rather than something that you can control.

Someone with misophonia will always be distressed and have an extreme reaction when they hear this sound.

You may find that you try to avoid the sound or become very anxious even before the sound is heard. Sometimes this can be seen in your behaviour, for example, maybe you don't want to go to a particular place, or you need to leave the room because of the sounds.

Do I have misophonia?

If you recognise the following behaviours, you may well have misophonia:

- having a big reaction to a particular sound (angry, annoyed, disgusted)
- protecting your ears in response to a particular sound
- becoming anxious either before or during exposure to a particular sound
- avoiding the sound source if possible.

How can I help myself?

The very good news is that when given the right help, we would expect your misophonia to get better. Misophonia does not need to be a problem forever, although recovering from it takes time and understanding.

The two ways to help are **behavioural management** and **recalibration**. Both of these are quite easy to use in everyday life. We suggest that you use both behavioural management and recalibration to give yourself the very best chances to get better.

Behavioural management

It might be helpful for you to note down the sounds that you know you are reacting towards; we have given you space below for you to do this. (You can look at this list when you finish the program. This is a great way to see how well you have done after following the program).

Sounds I react towards:

Example: breathing, chewing ...

Behavioural management is a way that you can help with the distress, anxiety and avoidance you have towards sounds. We suggest using the following steps.

Behavioural management structure:

1. Be reassured that the sounds you are reacting towards will not harm you.
2. You are not reacting on purpose; your reaction is an impulse, not a choice.
3. The person who is making the sounds you are reacting towards is not doing so on purpose.
4. Once your brain understands that a sound is not threatening, your reaction towards it will become less. Over time this will help your body to not react towards it.
5. Find ways to have some control over the sounds to gently build up tolerance towards them.
6. Gently repeating your exposure to the sound may help you become more used to it. We would never advise totally avoiding a sound, because this would not allow you the chance to have normal sensitivity of sound. It is important to let you know that **ear defenders, plugs or muffs should not be used except in some situations where it is very noisy and you need to protect your hearing** (such as a loud concert). Hearing normal sounds is really important if you are to have normal reactions towards sounds.
7. If you are forced to stay where you are upset, you probably will become more upset. It is important to make sure you can leave and go somewhere safe. A good way to do this is by working with some adults in your life (teachers in school, parents/carers at home) to make sure you have somewhere safe to go to, such as a quiet area in school or another room at home.

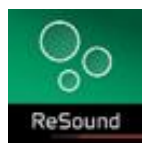
Recalibration

- ➔ Recalibration means using pleasant sounds to change the way you hear sounds that are upsetting you. Over time, recalibration turns down the volume control in your head towards those particular sounds, so that you hear the sounds and respond to them like the rest of us.
- ➔ We would ask you to make sure a continuous and nice sound is played over long periods of time. The easiest way to do this is overnight when you are sleeping, and we would ask you to make sure you hear the nice sounds from bedtime until morning. This helps your hearing to **recalibrate** its sensitivity towards sounds.
- ➔ The volume you need to listen to the sound is set to “comfortable listening level”; not so noisy that it disturbs the household, and not so quiet that you are straining to hear it.
- ➔ For this treatment to work, you would need to listen to the sound **every night** for at least 12-18 months.

The two ways to obtain sound for recalibration are:

Option 1. App downloaded to your phone or tablet

There are a variety of “environmental sounds” apps suitable which can be downloaded free onto a device. We know of the following two because they are made by companies that we work with in the Audiology services.



Resound Relief -

www.resound.com/en-US/hearing-aids/apps/relief-app



This app offers a library of sound therapy files and lets you create your own sounds from environmental sounds and small pieces of music.



Starkey Relax –

www.starkey.com/blog/2015/05/Relax-Tinnitus-App-New



This app offers a library of sound therapy files and lets you create your own sounds from environmental sounds and small pieces of music.

This app allows you to customise 12 relief sounds by changing the sounds' volume and pitch, providing your own personalised sound.

Note: Your parents/carers may be concerned about using technology overnight in your room. Some people have found using a bluetooth speaker inside their room helpful (with the paired device outside of their room).

Option 2. Using a night-time sound enrichment device

These tend to be relaxation devices for many different conditions such as stress, problems sleeping, and a condition called Tinnitus. The sounds that these devices make are very helpful in helping sensitivities towards sounds. Devices can be purchased online.

www.connevans.co.uk/product/1447936/14WELLC/Wellcare-Naturecare-Tinnitus-Sound-Relaxer



www.connevans.co.uk/catalogue/27074666/Tinnitus-sound-relaxers



www.connevans.co.uk/catalogue/27074667/Pillow-speakers-for-Sleep-or-Tinnitus-therapy



Note: if you have a strong dislike of any of the suggested sounds, use of a fan in the room or a sensory light (if you have one at home) which make a continuous background noise can be used as alternative sound sources.

