

TINNITUS IN CHILDREN AND ASSOCIATED RISK FACTORS

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Objective: Estimate tinnitus prevalence and risk factors in school-aged children.

Methods: We asked “Do you hear a noise inside your ears/head?” and required children to be able to describe the sounds perceived and their location. We refer to this as tinnitus sensation. Additionally, to determine if this experience was bothersome, we asked “Does it bother or annoy you?” and “In what situations does it bother or annoy you?” We refer to this as tinnitus annoyance. Associations to demographic and audiological factors were studied.

Results: Surprisingly, about 37.5% of the children (n=190) reported tinnitus sensation and 19.6 % (n=99) tinnitus annoyance. Related factors were age, gender, hearing loss, history of noise exposure, motion sickness and hyperacusis.

Conclusion: The prevalence of tinnitus clearly depends on its definition. We asked “Do you hear a noise inside your ears/head?” but did not distinguish the duration or frequency of this tinnitus experience of. It is likely that if we have asked if tinnitus was perceived daily, the prevalence would have been less. Our estimates of tinnitus annoyance were also broad, and did not attempt to quantify the degree of annoyance.

Keywords: tinnitus, hyperacusis, children, cross sectional study, prevalence