



QNAS

PROCESS

A Structured Approach
to Tinnitus Amelioration

www.tinnitusclinic.ie

Tinnitus affects hundreds of millions of people worldwide, often creating distress that goes far beyond the sound itself. While there is no universal cure, modern neuroscience demonstrates that the auditory system is not a fixed entity but a flexible, adaptive engine capable of re-mapping its priorities.

The QNAS Process — Quietness through Neuro-Auditory Stimulation — builds on this natural capacity. While a clinical evaluation for each individual is the best way to assess and customise a tinnitus plan, at present, we do not have the capacity in our clinics to meet the demand. However, in its own right, the QNAS Audio Kit will help many experiencing tinnitus to get a valuable portion of our consultation until we can increase our consultation capacity.

The QNAS method, and its practical delivery through the QNAS Audio Kit, has two principal aims:

To provide a structured daily exercise that helps retrain the auditory system and produce a long-term reduction in the prominence of tinnitus.

To offer a tool for immediate relief during periods of heightened tinnitus distress.

THE SCIENCE OF TINNITUS

(Why It Becomes Intrusive)

Modern auditory neuroscience shows that tinnitus becomes bothersome not simply because a phantom sound intrudes into your awareness, but because of how the brain responds to it.

When the auditory system receives reduced stimulation (due to hearing loss, auditory neuropathy or other factors), certain neural circuits increase their internal activity to “fill the gap”. This increased gain can create a phantom signal, known as tinnitus.

Three major systems contribute to tinnitus becoming intrusive:

1. AUDITORY CORTEX:

Reduced auditory input causes increased spontaneous firing, which the brain interprets as sound.

2. ATTENTION NETWORKS:

The more attention a person gives to tinnitus, even unconsciously, the more the brain prioritises it.

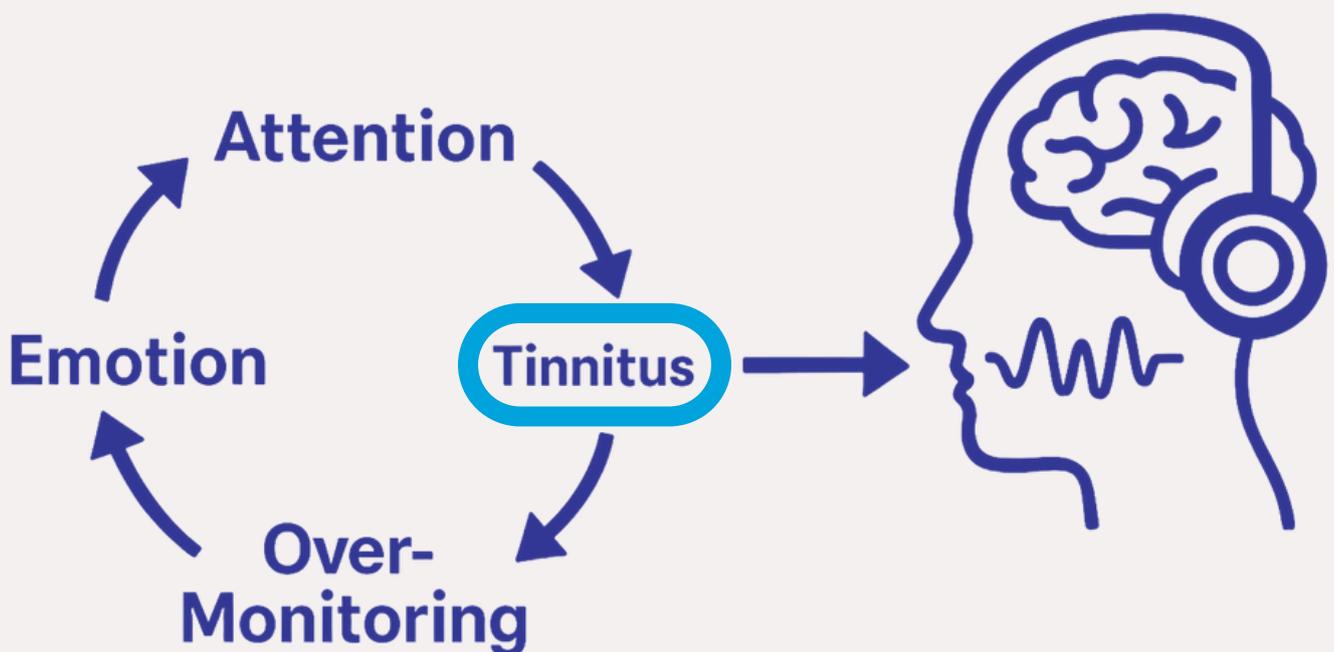
3. LIMBIC SYSTEM (EMOTION):

The limbic centres attach emotional weight to tinnitus. When the signal is classified as a threat, annoyance or danger, it becomes more intrusive.

HOW QNAS HELPS

The full QNAS clinical process identifies the weakness in a person's auditory system, then, through stimulation, retrains the auditory and attention systems to recategorise tinnitus as a neutral background signal.

Daily structured sound work gently interrupts the cycle of attention, emotion, and over-monitoring, allowing the brain to treat tinnitus like any other ordinary background noise.



THE NATURAL BASIS OF QNAS

Our auditory system constantly categorises sound. Important signals, such as a conversation, approaching footsteps, or a ringing phone, are kept in the foreground. Unimportant, repetitive sounds (waves at the shore, wind in trees, distant traffic) are pushed into the background.

This ability to “tune out” is not passive; it is an active, efficient neurological process.

QNAS exploits this same mechanism, encouraging the brain to categorise tinnitus in the same way it categorises other background sounds: present, but unimportant, and not worth sustained attention.





WHY MASKING FALLS SHORT

A common approach to tinnitus is masking, using louder sounds to drown it out. But masking is a blunt instrument. It is, in analogy, like using a shotgun to crack a peanut shell. The peanut will open, but the method is destructive and disproportionate.

QNAS, by contrast, is like applying precise pressure at a single point on the shell, opening it cleanly and without force. Where masking drowns tinnitus with noise, often creating dependency, QNAS teaches the auditory system a subtler lesson: that tinnitus belongs in the category of sounds not worth processing.

THE EXERCISE FRAMEWORK



PHASE 1

CHOOSING THE SOUND

Using the free Widex Zen Tinnitus app, the patient is asked to explore a palette of soundscapes. These sounds are gentle, neutral, and deliberately unremarkable.

The task is to find one or two that either:

- reduce the prominence of tinnitus, or
- feel calming and pleasant.

The key is not volume but suitability. The sounds should never overwhelm. They must remain soft enough that environmental sounds can still be heard.

PHASE 2

DAILY PRACTICE

The exercise is short, deliberate, and consistent. For 10–15 minutes each day, in a quiet, interruption-free environment, the patient listens to their chosen soundscape.

The aim is not to concentrate intensely but to engage lightly, then allow the mind to drift towards neutral or pleasant thoughts.

If attention wanders, that is not a failure but part of the process. From time to time, attention is gently returned to the sound.

Over weeks, the auditory system learns through repetition that tinnitus is in the same class as the chosen background sound — unremarkable, tolerable, not central.

PHASE 3

TRAINING THE SYSTEM

The auditory system is best understood as a “categorisation engine”. Like a librarian filing books, it decides what belongs in the “important” section and what belongs in “background”.

Repeated exercises teach it to re-file tinnitus in the latter category.

Patients are encouraged to let their mind wander naturally — to a cup of tea, a page of a book, or an ordinary daily task. This gentle mental drift reinforces the idea that tinnitus is not worthy of strong attention.

PHASE 4

TIMING AND DURATION

The exercise must be kept separate from bedtime. Conducting it before sleep can confuse the auditory system and may disrupt rest.

The ideal is 10–15 minutes daily. Even five minutes has value.

Two short sessions may be used, but long sessions (30–40 minutes) risk turning tinnitus into a project of undue importance, the opposite of QNAS's intent.

PHASE 5

PRIMARY AND BACKUP SOUNDS

Patients choose a primary sound for daily training and a backup sound for difficult moments.

The backup sound has two functions:

- Preventing boredom when the primary sound feels tedious.
- Providing immediate relief during distressing tinnitus episodes.

The primary sound should allow some tinnitus to remain audible, to teach contrast.

The backup sound should be the one that reduces tinnitus most effectively, played softly, just enough to calm.

PRACTICAL USE OF THE HEADSET

The QNAS Audio Kit employs a bone conduction headset — chosen for its safety, comfort, and superior sound quality. Bone conduction leaves the ear canal open, preserves natural acoustics, and transmits sound up to ten times faster than air.

THE HEADSET IS:

- Lightweight and durable
- Waterproof and comfortable for extended use
- **Safe:** Vibrations at high volume naturally discourage unsafe listening levels
- **Versatile:** suitable for calls, music, meetings, or social media use alongside tinnitus exercises

The battery provides approximately 6 hours of streaming.

The device may be worn in bed without disturbing others, or during daily activity, though patients are advised not to rely on it excessively for immediate relief.

The goal remains
independence, not
dependency.

WHO MAY NEED MORE THAN SOUND-BASED EXERCISES

While many people benefit from the QNAS Audio Kit alone, some may require a broader management plan, particularly if they have:

- Underlying hearing loss
- Auditory neuropathy
- Significant emotional distress
- Sleep disruption
- Anxiety-driven monitoring of tinnitus

In these cases, the QNAS Audio Kit still helps, but it works best alongside:

- Hearing technology
- Structured tinnitus programmes
- CBT-based therapy
- Sleep optimisation
- Stress management strategies



WORKSHEETS / REFLECTION TOOLS

(A separate template page is provided)

- Daily Practice Tracker
- Date | Duration | Sound Used | Notes on Tinnitus (before/after)
- Trigger Log
- What happened? | When? | Reaction to tinnitus? | What helped?
- Background Moments Log
- Time | Activity | When tinnitus faded into the background | What was different?
- These simple tools can dramatically increase follow-through and patient engagement.

30-DAY GUIDE

(A separate template page is provided)

A light structure to help patients stay consistent:

Week 1 — Learning & Setup

Choose sounds, learn routine, practice gently.

Week 2 — Attention Drift

Focus on letting the mind wander during practice.

Week 3 — Habituation Strengthening

Notice moments where tinnitus feels less present.

Week 4 — Consolidation

Aim for neutrality, stability, and reduced monitoring.

FINALLY - SOME DAILY TIPS

- Avoid silence — keep a gentle background sound
- Keep the QNAS Audio Kit volume soft and comfortable
- Use the backup sound during difficult moments
- Support sleep with predictable routines
- Reduce caffeine late in the day
- Focus on neutrality, not suppression
- Be patient, neuroplasticity is gradual
- Get a full evaluation as soon as you can

© 2025 The Tinnitus Clinic Ireland. All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of The Tinnitus Clinic Ireland, except in the case of brief quotations used in reviews or educational materials with proper attribution.

For permissions, contact: info@tinnitusclinic.ie