

Tech Reviews

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Misophonia

BY CURT WETMORE

Increased sound tolerance is a common audiologic complaint. Unlike the classic characteristics of hyperacusis whereby a patient is sensitive to the frequency or volume of a sound, misophonia is a strong emotional and psychological reaction to a sound with a specific pattern or meaning. These trigger sounds can range from noises produced by other people (i.e. lip smacking, chewing sounds, or pen clicking) to environmental noises (i.e. a distant engine or a cat purring). Misophonic reactions to a trigger sound can include feelings of extreme rage, anxiety, frustration and disgust.

First proposed in 2000, misophonia remains a complex and elusive phenomenon. It is currently not included in the DSM-5 but has attracted media attention and public awareness in recent years. Currently there is little consensus regarding the exact definition and nature of misophonia and little high-quality evidence for any treatments; patients

should be made aware of this prior to being encouraged to do their own research in the area. With the growing awareness and curiosity around misophonia, I wanted to highlight some online resources that patients have access to:

www.misophonia.com

This website contains information on common symptoms and triggers and introduces visitors to treatment options such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and tinnitus retraining therapy (TRT). The website also contains downloadable resources which include educational brochures and explanation letter templates. The highlight of this website is the online support forum: a virtual environment where you can create a profile, connect with other people suffering with misophonia, read personal experiences and engage in discussions on current research. The website also connects visitors to a misophonia support group on Facebook that currently has over 15,000 followers.

Home Symptoms & Triggers Resource Center Treatment Support Forum Get Involved

Misophonia.com strives to provide relative and current information on misophonia and recognizes that misophonia is still in the initial stages of study. Keeping an open mind may serve one well when seeking treatment of this difficult disorder as there is no definitive course of action. Participating and supporting research is worthwhile as is bringing sound sensitivities to the awareness of the public. Support groups are helpful to many people and offer comradery and support.

The members of the message board and Facebook group reported that increased general knowledge about misophonia and suggestions for coping with specific issues was invaluable.

Medical Professionals That Can Help

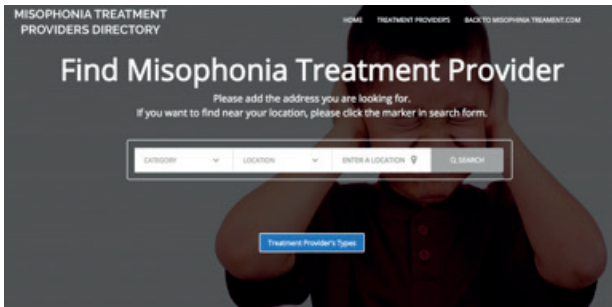
Audiologists
An audiologist may help by evaluating whether a person has misophonia or some other audiological issue. Audiologists can suggest the use of earplugs and fit them to an individual. These can be made to supply white noise or other sounds to mask problem noises.

Psychologists
Psychologists can help people by evaluating and studying behavior and mental processes. A plan for reducing stress and coping with the symptoms of misophonia could be developed by a psychologist familiar with the condition.

Psychiatrists
A psychiatrist is a medical practitioner specializing in the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness. Although misophonia is not thought to be a

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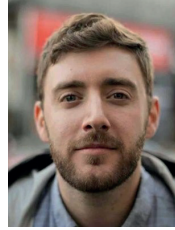


www.misophonainstitute.org

The Misophonia Institute is comprised of many researchers and professionals who are dedicated to understanding misophonia and improving the lives of those who suffer with it. The website features information on various forms of treatment and includes management protocols for families, audiologists and schools. It also contains links to published peer-reviewed articles. The website is linked to a treatment provider database that allows visitors to seek help depending on treatment preference as well as geographical location. Currently, the majority of treatment providers in this database are located in the US; however, some providers offer telemedical services to provide clinical care remotely.

An online search might be the first point of contact for someone suffering with misophonia and websites like these help introduce and guide appropriate treatment. Online misophonia forums also have the potential to foster a sense of community and help members take management into their own hands. After all, patients wishing to cope with misophonia must learn adaptive behaviours that continue beyond the clinic.

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