

Can a gluten free hot cross bun ever hit the spot?

GLUTEN-FREE hot cross buns may sound healthier, but don't be tempted for this reason alone.

As Sioned Quirke, a registered dietitian, explains: 'Gluten-free buns tend to be slightly higher in calories and higher in fat than regular ones — often fat is added to make them more palatable and get the springy texture you would expect.'

But which is the best gluten-free bun?

Here, Sioned assesses four, which we have rated for taste and health value.

SAINSBURY'S FREE FROM HOT CROSS BUNS

£2.20 for four (also wheat and dairy-free). Per 70g bun: calories, 210; saturated fat, 0.7g; sugar, 11.8g; fibre, 3.5g; salt, 0.41g.

EXPERT VERDICT: Slightly more calories and saturated fat than the others — possibly because of the sunflower oil. But lowest in sugar.

TASTE: Dry, but tasty hint of lemon. Decent amount of fruit. **6/10**



MARKS & SPENCER MADE WITHOUT WHEAT

£2.20 for two (also dairy-free). Per 80g bun: calories, 209; saturated fat, 0.4g; sugar, 19.2g; fibre, 4.9g; salt, 0.65g.

EXPERT VERDICT: Lowest in saturated fat but nearly four teaspoons of sugar per bun. Highest proportion of fruit, at 26 per cent, so some of the sugars will be natural. Highest in salt.

TASTE: Spongy and quite spicy, and it's loaded with fruit. **7/10**



TESCO FREE FROM

£2.50 for four (also wheat and dairy-free).

Per 70g bun: calories, 204; saturated fat, 0.6g; sugar, 13.4g; fibre, 3.5g; salt, 0.3g.

EXPERT VERDICT: Joint lowest hot cross bun in calories, along with Waitrose, and the lowest in salt. Fruit comes first on the ingredients list, which means that it's the weightiest ingredient. This is good, but it's probably not enough to count as one of your five a day.

TASTE: Disappointingly dry. Main discernible flavour is the fruit. **5/10**



WAITROSE LOVE LIFE

£2.49 for four (also wheat and dairy-free).

Per 70g bun: calories, 204; saturated fat, 0.6g; sugar, 13.4g; fibre, 3.5g; salt, 0.33g.

EXPERT VERDICT: This is similar to the Tesco hot cross bun in terms of nutritional content and the ingredients. Though it's joint lowest in calories, there's not much in it compared with the other hot cross buns, and it's still largely an amber product on the traffic light rating system (with regard to total fat, sugars and salt), which means it should not be eaten too regularly.

TASTE: Surprisingly moist with a springy texture and rounded flavour. Big chunks of fruit, but not an overly sweet taste — the most satisfying hot cross bun of those tested. **7/10**

DIANA PILKINGTON



Tinnitus so bad even the click of a light switch was agony

A cautionary tale from a guitarist who says years of loud music shattered his hearing



Playing again: Paul Gray

By YORK MEMBERY

— and I was hugely stressed.' By 1997, Paul had to admit defeat and call time on his musical career. He returned to the hospital and was prescribed maskers — a hearing aid-type device that played a hissing noise in his ears, now more commonly known as white noise generators. 'We were trying to retrain his brain into not focusing on the tinnitus — it was a distraction technique,' says Tim Bord, a senior audiologist at the hospital, who has been treating Paul since the mid-Nineties.

Paul was supposed to wear maskers for eight hours a day for a year. 'But I couldn't follow conversations or hear the television properly, because I had great big pieces of plastic in each ear,' he says.

By now, even the click of a light switch aggravated his condition. 'I pretty much became a recluse for the next few years, which contributed to my divorce,' he says.

In the late Nineties Paul was referred for counselling with a clinical psychologist, but this didn't work. He turned to alternative treatments, from the Alexander Technique (a method of relaxation) to acupuncture. At one stage he tried 'laser pen therapy' — shining a torch into your ear to

stimulate the growth of hair cells in the inner ear, as tinnitus has been linked to damaged hair cells.

'You name it, I threw money at it, but they were all useless,' says Paul, who resorted to hiding earplugs around the house to cope with the noise when his young son Jeff had friends round to play.

Nowadays, one of the most common treatments is cognitive behavioural therapy — a psychotherapeutic approach that tries to get the patient to change how they think about tinnitus.

WHILE this was some help, Paul concluded he was just going to have to learn to live with his condition. He carries custom-fitted maximum protection earplugs 'which keep the frequencies down and cuts external noise by about 25 decibels'.

Basic sets can be bought from most music shops, while Specsavers charges between £50 and £100 for a made-to-measure pair.

Paul also avoids noisy places as, like for many sufferers, background noise makes the problem worse.

'If I'm in a pub or restaurant I always try to position myself against the wall, so I only have sound coming from one direction,' he says.

There have been some advances in treatments since Paul was first diagnosed — such as the introduction of smaller 'in-ear' white noise generators, and

MUSICIAN Paul Gray first suspected he might have tinnitus while midway through a tour with punk band The Damned more than 30 years ago.

'I was in my hotel room one night, and I'd turned the TV off, but could still hear a high-pitched whiney sound,' he says. 'I wondered where it was coming from, looked all around the room, opened the windows, and then figured that it might just be tinnitus.'

This was in 1981, and back then few, if any, musicians wore earplugs when they played live. 'The yellow foam ones looked uncool and the wax ones were totally unsuitable for musicians as they cut out too much sound,' says Paul.

Besides, a lot of musicians — not to mention young fans — saw temporary hearing loss after a gig as something of a badge of honour.

'Back then, it was a case of "Oh, it must have been a great gig, my ears are still ringing",' says Paul, who first found fame as a bass guitarist with Eddie And The Hot Rods before going on to join The Damned and then later working with former Wham! star Andrew Ridgeley.

Tinnitus affects one in ten adults to some degree, according to the British Tinnitus Association. Many have hearing damage as a result of being exposed to loud noise, be it in industry, the armed forces or the music business. Last month, the World Health Organisation said people should listen to music for no more than an hour a day, to prevent damage to their hearing.

Tinnitus can also be triggered by conditions such as Meniere's disease, or in older people it can occur as a result of age-related hearing loss. Sufferers experience a constant whirring or whistling in their ears and many struggle to find an effective treatment.

AT first Paul, now 56, experienced 'a whine in my ears that was louder in my right ear, a bit like the sound of a jet turbine cranking up.' It was worse after gigs, but it would come and go, until one night in 1995 while Paul was on stage with Captain Sensible (who topped the charts with his cover of Happy Talk in the Eighties). 'There was this deafening screech of feedback, so loud that it physically knocked me several feet back,' he says.

'I ran off before the next song and stuffed toilet paper in my ears, but the damage had been done.'

Afterwards any sudden noise — doors banging, car breaks, shouting — would make him jump.

Back home in Cardiff, Paul's doctor referred him to a specialist at the University Hospital of Wales Ear, Nose and Throat Department, who diagnosed 'high-frequency hearing loss' after acoustic trauma, and advised him to limit his exposure to noise — and to get a new career. But for Paul, being a musician was more than a job.

'It was my life. So I carried on for a couple more years.'

However, the tinnitus gradually worsened. 'It was exacerbated by extraneous noises I had no control over, such as knives on plates, glasses clinking, children shouting

DID YOU KNOW?

EVERY time you breathe in, the brain gets an extra bathing of cerebrospinal fluid, which flushes out waste products. It's known that our heartbeat usually drives this process but, when German researchers scanned the brains of volunteers, they found an intake of breath has a stronger effect than the heartbeat.



devices that combine a hearing aid and sound generator in one.

A new treatment, neuromodulation — an earplug-type device designed to target the specific frequencies that distress an individual — is available privately, but is still undergoing trials.

Recently, researchers at the University of Western Australia said they'd identified a drug that blocks 'hyperactivity' in the area of the brain that processes sound — although they are yet to test the effect in humans.

Meanwhile, Paul is helping to educate music students about the dangers of loud music.

'We run a scheme called the Musician's Hearing Passport, which gives comprehensive tests and advice on hearing protection by an audiologist,' he says.

'Often when I ask students to raise their hands if their ears have ever rung, eight out of ten will put their hands up. These kids are 18, 19 years old, and don't realise the damage that's already been done.'

'There's still the attitude that I had, that noise is fun and that "if it's too loud, you're too old".'

Paul, who has recorded a new album, *A Postcard From Britain*, with his old bandmate Captain Sensible, is able to play again for up to an hour at a time, so long as he wears his earplugs.

He says his father had always warned him being in a rock band would 'make me go deaf' but he had ignored him.

'If I knew then how my life was going to be affected by noise damage — I'm pretty deaf now — I would definitely have taken steps to protect myself. After all, a musician needs ears... they're pretty vital tools of the trade.'

thesensiblegraycells.co.uk