

Ear Wax Problems

Ear wax is a substance named cerumen. It is made to protect the skin in the external ear canal from drying and cracking. It also helps keep water that may collect in the canal from causing irritation and infection from prolonged contact with the skin. Excessive ear wax can decrease hearing, cause ringing in the ear, be painful, or even cause an infection of the ear canal. If you have any of these symptoms ask us to check your ears for ear wax blockage.

If you have a blockage of your ear canal there are a few things that you can try:

1. **DO NOT USE COTTON SWABS.** Much like a ramrod that packs gunpowder into a cannon, cotton swabs pack the ear wax next to your ear drum making it difficult to remove and may even damage the ear drum.
2. **DO NOT USE EAR CANDLES.** They have been shown to be ineffective and may injure the sensitive skin in your ear canal.
3. **TRY HYDROGEN PEROXIDE.** Fill the canal with hydrogen peroxide prior to going to bed. This may loosen the ear wax and allow it to flow out.
4. **TRY MINERAL OIL.** Three drops at bedtime over three to four days may lubricate the canal enough to let the wax slide out.
5. **TRY DEBROX.** For many people the above treatments will help. If not you can either come and let us remove it or buy some Debrox over the counter and use 5-10 drops twice a day for up to a week and see if it helps to remove the earwax.
6. **COME LET US TAKE CARE OF IT.** The most effective way to get rid of ear wax is to let us remove it. We do so by using pressurized water to wash the wax out. This should not be done at home as you may damage the ear drum. Sometimes we will use a speculum to reach behind the wax and pull it out. These procedures done here have minimal discomfort. Rarely difficult to remove wax will require a referral to the ear specialist for removal with a specialized microscope.

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