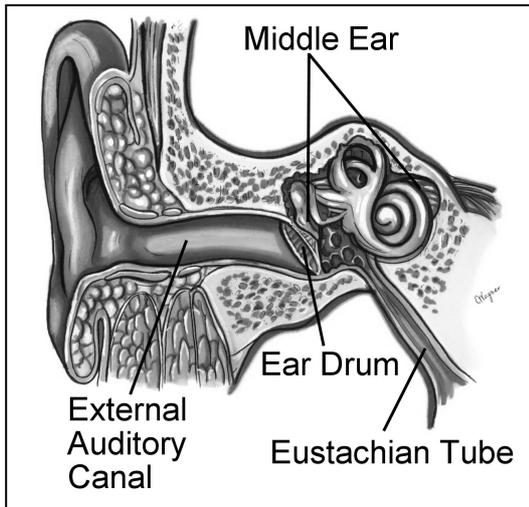


Cerumen (ear wax) impaction



Ear wax (cerumen) is part of the body's natural defenses. It protects the external ear canal from bacteria and fungi that normally live in the area. Normally, the ear is self-cleaning by the natural growth of ear skin from the inside to out.

If the natural cleaning mechanism is disturbed, wax impaction may occur. Trying to clean the ear with cotton tips commonly disrupts the normal cleaning, packing wax down against the ear drum and stimulating more wax production. This means the wax in your ear forms a

plug. This plug rarely causes significant hearing loss but may cause a blocked feeling, discomfort or ringing (tinnitus) in the ear. Importantly, a wax plug prevents your doctor from seeing your ear drums properly to assess for any potential causes of hearing loss.

Removing wax cerumen impaction can be difficult and painful. The wax sticks to the ear canal. The canal is sensitive and bleeds easily. Usually, Dr Iseli will use a small ear curette or suction (which sounds very loud but is quite safe) to clear out the wax. If the impaction is fixed to the skin in the ear canal, ear drops (almond or olive oil, peroxide, Waxsol, Cerumenex) may be needed for a few days to loosen the wax. Do not use cotton tips or ear candles to remove the wax- these are neither effective nor safe.

People who build up a lot of wax frequently can use ear wax removal products such as olive oil, Waxsol® or Hydrogen peroxide 3% regularly to prevent build up. Once the wax is soft, tilt your head down in the shower to allow water to run in (do NOT do this if you have a hole in your ear drum) and dry your ear canal afterwards using a hair dryer. Do not attempt to clean your own wax using a hair or paper clip – you may damage your ear drum.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop an earache, reduced hearing, or marked dizziness during cleaning

Hydrogen Peroxide 3% solution instructions;

Using a small (1-3mL) syringe, place 1-2mL of the hydrogen peroxide solution gently and slowly into your ear with your head tilted away from the side you are treating. If you find this an uncomfortable position lie on your side with the ear being treated facing up and ask a family member or friend to trickle the solution in. Leave your head to the side for 30-60seconds. Your ear canal will feel warm and you will feel and hearing a bubbling. Tip your head to the other side and allow the fluid to drain out, carrying the wax with it.

You can do this twice a day for a week if the ear is very full of wax or once a week to prevent build up.

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