



Earwax

Earwax coats and protects the lining of the ear canal. It filters dust and helps keep the ears clean. Normally, earwax is soft and drains by itself. Sometimes it hardens and forms a plug.



SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Signs and symptoms of earwax buildup are:

- Blocked or plugged feeling in the ear
- Partial hearing loss (temporary)
- Ringing in the ear
- Ear discomfort or pain

CAUSES, RISK FACTORS & CARE

- Exposure to excessive dust or dirt
- A family history of earwax buildup

Simple earwax build-up can be treated using self-care. If self-care doesn't take care of the problem, a doctor can clear the earwax with a special vacuum, scoop, or water-pik-like device.

PREVENTION

- Wear earplugs when exposed to excessive dust or dirt.
- Don't use cotton swabs in the ear. They tend to pack the earwax down more tightly.
- Don't push objects into the ear canal.



SELF-CARE

{Note: Use only if you know that your eardrum is not ruptured or infected.}

- Don't try to scrape out earwax. You could put a hole in your eardrum or damage the skin of your ear canal.
- Don't use cold water to clear out ear wax. This could cause dizziness.
- Use an over-the-counter product, such as Murine Ear Drops, Debrox, etc. Follow package directions.
- If ear cleaning drops don't work, use a bulb syringe available at the grocery store or drug store to flush out the earwax. Fill the syringe with warm sterile water or a mixture of 1 part warm sterile water and 1 part hydrogen peroxide. Place the syringe near your ear opening and carefully squeeze the bulb. The warm solution will help to break up the wax. Turn your head to the side over a sink to let the water and wax flow out. If the ear wax does not clear out, contact your doctor about having them remove it in their office.



CONTACT DOCTOR WHEN

- You have sudden or total hearing loss in one or both ears.
- You have signs of a ruptured eardrum:
 - Ear pain
 - Blood or other ear discharge
 - Partial hearing loss
 - Ringing or burning in the ear
- You have ear pain with any of these signs of an ear infection:
 - Feeling of fullness in the ear that leads to ear pain
 - Fever of 101°F or higher
 - Blood, pus, or fluid from the ear
 - Temporary hearing loss
 - Redness and swelling of the skin of the ear canal
 - Nausea, vomiting, and/or dizziness
- Earwax has not cleared after using self-care for several days.