



PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUTS

Earwax Problems Brief Version

What is earwax?

Everyone has earwax in the ears. It can be light yellow to dark brown. Earwax can help kill germs. It helps protect the inside of the ear canal.

The ear canal can clean itself. If you do nothing, most of the time earwax will fall out on its own.

How can I take care of my child?

If earwax is blocking one of the ear canals and your child cannot hear on that side, then it is important to flush out the packed earwax. Most of the time, it's best to just leave it alone.

To flush out packed earwax:

1. If the wax is hard, soften it first. Put a mixture of water and baking soda in the ear. Make the mixture by adding 1/4 teaspoon (1.25 mL) of baking soda to 2 teaspoons (10 mL) of water. Fill the ear canal and leave it in for 1 hour. After an hour, most the earwax should be dissolved.
2. When the wax is soft, wash it out with water. A little hydrogen peroxide can be added to the water. Use a rubber ear syringe or Water-Pik set on low. If the water is not at body temperature, your child could get dizzy.
3. Flush out the ear several times until the water comes out clear. The ear canal should seem open when you look in with a light. **Remember:** Never put water in the ear if your child has tubes or if you think the eardrum could have a hole in it.

Do not put cotton swabs inside the ear canal. When you put cotton swabs inside the ear canal, it can pack the wax deeper into the ear.

When should I call my child's healthcare provider?

Call during office hours if:

- Your child's hearing does not go back to normal after you flush out the earwax.
- You see anything but earwax coming from the ear canal.
- Problems with earwax happen again.
- You have other concerns or questions.

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This content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available. The information is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional.

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