



Earwax

Earwax is a brown, orange or yellowish waxy substance secreted in the ear canal. It is produced by the ear to clean and protect itself and is secreted by glands in the skin that line the outer half of the ear canals. The earwax traps dust and other tiny foreign particles that could damage deeper structures in the ear such as the eardrum.

Earwax naturally makes its way out of the ear canal and just falls out on its own, bringing any dust and dirt with it. Some people produce a lot of wax in their ears, some very little.

It is perfectly normal to see a lot of earwax coming out of your child's ears. This usually means that the earwax is moving out of the ear as it should do and there is no earwax building up inside the ear canal. Simply clean away the earwax from the outside of the ear using a tissue or a wipe.

Important

Do not use your fingers or any objects like cotton buds to try and remove earwax This will simply push it further into the ear and make it worse.

Earwax build-up

Symptoms of earwax build-up include:

- hearing loss
- earache or a feeling that the ears are blocked
- ringing or buzzing in the ears (tinnitus)

Treating earwax build-up with olive oil drops or spray

These are available cheaply at any pharmacy or supermarket. Putting one or two drops / sprays of olive oil into your child's ear can help to soften the wax, so it can come out the ear by itself. This should be done twice a day, every day, for about two weeks.

It may help to put the drops /spray in when your child is lying down with their head on one side for a while to let the oil work it's way into the ear canal. Pulling the ear gently up and back when you put in the drops can also help the oil get into the ear. If your child objects to having the drops or spray put into their ear, try to do it whilst they are asleep.

Do not use olive oil ear drops or spray if your child has a hole in the eardrum (a perforated eardrum) or grommets have been fitted.

If you are unsure speak to a pharmacist, audiologist or your GP about earwax build-up. They can give you advice and suggest treatments. They may recommend medicines to dissolve the earwax. The earwax should fall out on its own or dissolve after about a week.

Do not use ear candles – they are dangerous and there's no evidence that they get rid of earwax.

Removing Earwax

Sometimes the use of ear drops is not enough to remove the earwax, especially if it is situated deep in the ear canal. In this case a referral to the Ear, Nose and Throat department may be needed so that the earwax can be removed using microsuction. Microsuction uses a microscope to view your ear canal and a small 'hoover' to suck out the ear wax, making it a gentle, pain free procedure.