

## **EARWAX BLOCKAGE**

Overproduction of earwax (cerumen) can cause blockage of the external ear canal. Wax is produced by the glands in the ear to protect the canal leading from the eardrum to the outside. The amount produced varies from person to person. Some produce so little wax that it never accumulates. Others produce enough to block the canal every few months.

Frequent signs and symptoms include decreased hearing, ear pain plugged feeling in the ear, and ringing in the ear. It is caused by overproduction of wax by glands in the external ear canal.

The risk of earwax blockage increases with exposure to dust or debris, family history of earwax overproduction, water in the ear canal or the use of cotton swabs in an attempt to clean the ear canal. Remember the old adage: Don't put anything in your ear smaller than your elbow!

Earwax buildup can be prevented by avoidance of areas where the air is dusty or filled with debris. This stimulates overproduction of earwax. Consider wearing earplugs if you must be in this type of environment. In addition the monthly use of 1-2 drops of glycerin in the ear may soften the wax and prevent recurrent blockage. Earwax can be removed, but stubborn cases require patience. Possible complications include ear infection and eardrum damage.

To remove earwax at home, buy non-prescription wax-softening eardrops such as cerumenex or murine. Lie down with the affected ear toward the ceiling, and pull the top of the ear gently up and back toward the back of the head. Instill the eardrops according to the instructions on the package. Leave the drops in the ear for 20 minutes.

Continue to lie down, and plug the ear with cotton. Sit up, leaning a little toward the affected side, and use a soft rubber bulb syringe to irrigate the ear canal gently with plain warm water or equal parts warm water and hydrogen peroxide. Repeat irrigations until the ear feels clear. If the ear doesn't clear, come to the Health Center so we can remove it.

Don't try to remove wax with a stick or cotton q-tip. You may damage the eardrum or cause infection in ear canal. For minor pain, use Tylenol. If fever and ear pain occurs, do not irrigate, but come directly to the Health Center.

We at the Health Center will be happy to help you.



**Healthfully yours,**

**Dr. Healthberry**

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For questions or comments you can;

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