
Ear Wax Information:

The ear is made up of three different parts: the outer ear (the part you can see); the middle ear (which is separated from the outer ear by the eardrum and contains tiny bones that amplify sound waves); and the inner ear (where sound waves are translated into electrical impulses and sent to the brain). The ear canal cleans itself with a waxy secretion called cerumen. Sometimes, the wax builds up and causes symptoms, including mild deafness and a sensation of fullness inside the ear. This condition is harmless and easily treated. In some cases, the wax plug loosens and falls out by itself without the need for intervention.

Symptoms:

- Mild deafness
- Earache
- A sensation of fullness inside the ear
- Tinnitus (ringing in the ear)
- Dizziness

Cause:

The skin lining the ear canal contains glands that produce cerumen. This yellowish - brown waxy substance protects the tissues, and helps prevent infection by trapping micro-organisms, dirt and other irritants. Wax is constantly travelling towards the outer ear where it can drop out. Actions of the jaw, such as talking and chewing, help to 'massage' the wax out of the canal. The ear wax you see is a combination of cerumen, shed skin cells and dirt. As we get older our wax gets thicker and the hairs in our ear canal get longer making the wax harder to clear.

Some people are more prone to ear wax blockages than others due to:

- A tendency to produce a lot of ear wax
- Narrow ear canals.
- Hairy ear canals.
- Overzealous cleaning with fingertips or cotton buds, which pushes wax further down the canals.
- Working in dusty or dirty environments.
- Inflammatory conditions of the skin or scalp.
- Patients that wear hearing aids as the aid prevents the natural movement of the wax.

Treatment:

Drops to soften the ear wax and help it to fall out on its own.

Withdrawal of the wax using a suction device.

Removing the wax with forceps or a special hook.

Large quantities of hardened wax may need to be treated by an ear specialist.

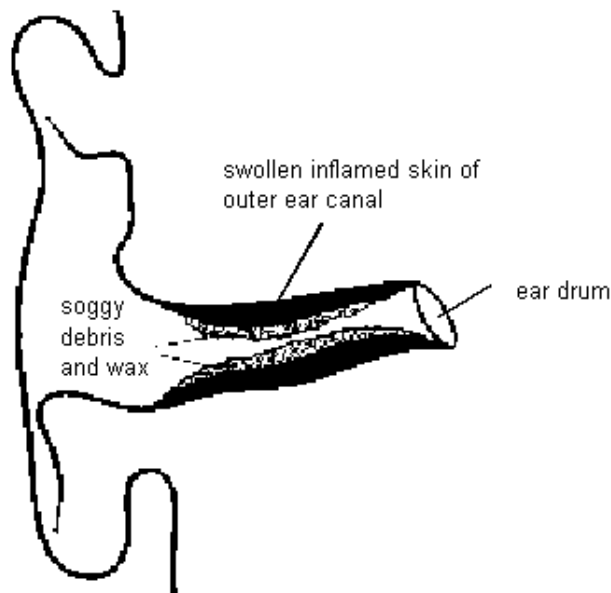
It is not possible to reduce the amount of ear wax you produce or widen your ear canals without an operation. However, there are ways to reduce the incidence of wax build-up, including:

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Treatment:

- Use wax-softening drops e.g. waxsol – this can be irritating to some peoples skin, or olive oil twice a week, or according to the manufacturer’s instructions.
- Avoid cleaning the ear canals with cotton buds or fingertips, as any object poked into the ear can further compact the wax.
- Limit ear cleaning to the outer ear only. Treat any associated inflammatory skin conditions like eczema etc.
- Hydrogen Peroxide 3% and Nozoil are good cleaners and softeners.



The ear canal is subject to infection

Ear cleaning options

- Amplify Hearing 02 6021 7500
- Cobram ear nurse Lin Cole 03 5871 1535
- or GPs who have done ENT programs.