

## **Ear Wax – What You Need to Know**

Earwax is a normal product of the ear. It protects the skin of the ear from water and infection.

### **What can go wrong with Ear Wax?**

1. Wax can plug up the ear, causing hearing to be reduced, and full feeling in the ear
2. Wax can trap bacteria in the ear, leading to infection.

### **How is Ear Wax Treated?**

Too much wax can be removed with drops, with water jets (“irrigation”) and with instruments used by a doctor, audiologist or trained technician.

Over the counter drops that help remove wax are all basically oil and peroxide solutions (e.g. Debrox or Murine). These preparations are best for those with small to moderate amounts of wax. THESE PREPARATIONS SHOULD NOT BE USED IN PERSONS WITH AN EARDRUM PERFORATION. We advise against use of “enzyme” based preparations, such as Cerumenex, because of problems with allergy.

Irrigation with suction is an effective method of removing wax in the office, usually used by nurses or family practitioners. Removal under direct vision by a doctor or other professional is the best method of getting wax out, but it requires a doctor’s visit.

### **Ear Wax Maintenance**

First, all earwax isn’t bad. It keeps your ear dry and helps prevent infection. So, you don’t want to eliminate wax, just keep it from blocking your ear.

And finally, PLEASE DON’T USE ‘Q’ TIPS. Use of ‘Q’ tips or for that matter, anything else that you can get into your ear, is very dangerous. You run the risk of breaking your

eardrum (“perforation”), as well as jamming wax deeper inside. Remember what your mother told you, “Never put anything smaller than your elbow in your ear!”