



AUDIOLOGY

Information Series

Nothing Smaller Than Your Elbow, Please

Pamela Mason, MEd, CCC-A, Director of Audiology Professional Practices at the ASHA National Office

Earwax: We all have it. We want it gone.

Most audiologists are asked about earwax. What is it? Why is it sticky? Why do I make so much? How can I get rid of it?

Earwax is good for your ears.

Earwax keeps your ears clean.

Earwax, or cerumen, traps dust and dirt, like dried shampoo and shaving cream and sometimes even a bug. This is held together by oil and wax comes from glands living in your ear canal. The wax also protects and can stop bad bacteria from growing in the ear. And you thought it was just a pain!

Earwax isn't always sticky.

Earwax can look different for different people. It can be wet (honey-colored and sticky) or dry (grayish and flaky). Wet or dry, your earwax depends on where your family came from. Families from Europe or Africa have wet wax. Dry and flaky wax is found in families from northeastern Asia.

You can have too much earwax.

Some medications, stress, and exercise will cause your body to make too much earwax. Also, your body will make more wax as you get older. For many people, earwax comes out by itself. Sometimes twists, turns, or small ear canals can trap wax. It cannot easily come out. Wax can become trapped in your ear if, for example, you wear in-ear phones that block the way out making it hard to hear and possibly uncomfortable.

NOTES:



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You can hurt your hearing and ear by trying to get rid of your earwax at home.

Most people do not know how to safely take out their earwax. You may use tooth picks, hair pins, or Q-tips to try and clean your ears. This may not be safe. You can puncture the eardrum or push the wax even further into the ear. Earwax then becomes impacted up close to the eardrum. The wax will get dry like a hard ball. This can cause a temporary hearing loss or dizziness.

An audiologist can help you take out your earwax.

An audiologist is the professional who focuses on preventing and evaluating hearing and balance disorders as well as providing audiologic treatment, including hearing aids. Audiologists will advise you on how to prepare for a professional ear cleaning. They often provide earwax removal. They can even schedule a few appointments if you want to keep your ears clean. Contact an audiologist if you are dizzy or have any problems hearing...

You may have heard,...put nothing smaller than your elbow in your ear and let Mother Nature do her work.

For more information about hearing loss, hearing aids, or referral to an ASHA-certified audiologist, contact:



2200 Research Boulevard
Rockville, MD 20850
800-638-8255

E-mail: actioncenter@asha.org
Website: www.asha.org

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2200 Research Boulevard, Rockville, MD 20850 • 800-638-8255

