



Ear, Nose, Throat

Sinus, Allergy, Audiology

Snoring & Sleep Apnea

MINNEAPOLIS OTOLARYNGOLOGY, P.A.

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Thomas Ayre, M.D. - John Boone, M.D. - Brian Drew, M.D. - Lisa Posey, M.D. - Philip Rapport, M.D. - Robert Silver, M.D. -

Earwax (Cerumen)

Never put anything smaller than your elbow in your ear! Never use cotton swabs in the ear canal.

The Outer Ear And Canal

Earwax is actually important to ear health and protects the thin sensitive skin of the ear canal by acting as a water repellent. The ear canal may be blocked by wax when attempts to clean the ear push wax deeper into the ear canal and cause a blockage. Wax blockage is one of the most common causes of hearing loss. Most of the time the ear canals are self-cleaning. There is no need to try to clean deep in the ear canal. However, some people have excessive earwax which blocks the ear canal and can cause hearing loss, ringing, pressure, or even pain.

Self Treatment For Earwax

Most cases of earwax blockage respond to home treatments used to soften wax if there is no hole in the eardrum. Patients can try placing a few drops of mineral oil, baby oil, glycerin, or commercial ear wax removal drops, such as Debrox®, or Murine®, into the plugged ear.

When Should I See My Doctor?

If you are uncertain whether you have a hole (perforation or puncture) in your eardrum, consult your physician prior to trying any over-the-counter remedies. Putting eardrops or other products in your ear in the presence of an eardrum perforation may cause an infection. Certainly, washing water through such a hole could start an infection. In the event that the home treatments discussed in this leaflet are not satisfactory, or if wax has accumulated so much that it blocks the ear canal (and hearing), your physician may prescribe eardrops designed to soften wax, or he may wash or vacuum it out. In some patients, an otolaryngologist (ENT specialist) may need to remove the wax using a microscope and specialized instruments.

Edina

Southdale Medical Center
6525 France Avenue So. #325
Edina, MN 55435
(952) 920-4595 —phone
(952) 920-7958 —fax

Burnsville

Oak Ridge Professional Building
625 Nicollet Boulevard #204
Burnsville, MN 55337
(952) 920-4595 —phone
(952) 920-7958 —fax

Shakopee

South Valley Medical Office Building
1515 St. Francis Ave. #250
Shakopee, MN 55379
(952) 920-4595 —phone
(952) 920-7958 —fax