Cambridgeshire Community Services
NHS Trust

Cleaning the Ears

Community Paediatric Audiology Services

Providing a lifetime of care

Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust, providing services across Cambridgeshire, Peterborough, Luton and Suffolk
Our ears are designed to:
- Clean themselves
- Protect the delicate parts inside

If you try to "clean" your ears, you risk causing injury or infection to delicate parts inside the ear.

Earwax
- is nature's way of safely cleaning the ear
- coats the outer third of the ear canal
- can be yellow, brown or black in colour
- can be dry and flaky or moist and sticky
- should NOT smell nasty

Earwax is designed to
- repel water
- stop the ear canal from getting dry and itchy by keeping the skin moist
- protect the ear from infection
- trap dust and germs - keeping them from reaching the eardrum

How does it work?
Earwax builds up inside the ear canal. It dries and moves outwards, bringing trapped dust with it. It usually falls out on its own even if you don't see it.

It is a natural process - it doesn't need your help!

Babies and small children
- Often have very efficient self-cleaning ears
- often appear to produce a lot of earwax

Earwax coming out of the ear:
- is natural
- is nothing to worry about
- is NOT a sign of a 'dirty' ear
- IS a sign of a good self-cleaning ear

DO
- If the outsides of your ears get dirty, wash them carefully using a soft face-cloth with soap and water
- If you are washing your baby's ears, use cotton-wool balls dampened with plain water – no soap
- Pat the ears dry when finished

DON'T
- Don't poke things into the ear canal
  → NO COTTON RUDS
  → NO FINGERS
  → NO FACE-CLOTHS
  → NO SHARP OBJECTS
- you risk injuring the delicate skin or making a hole through the eardrum
- you risk pushing the wax deeper into the ear
- you risk interrupting the ears' own cleaning process
- you risk causing the ear wax to block the ear which can result in discomfort, temporary hearing loss, and require an Ear Specialist to remove it

Remember
Removing the ear's protective wax layer, scratching the skin in the ear canal, and/or pushing wax in deeper can increase the risk of an infection.
- LEAVE THE INSIDES OF YOUR EARS ALONE
- DON'T POKE ANYTHING INTO THE EAR
- DON'T BE CONCERNED ABOUT EARWAX

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