

## Should I remove a wax blockage myself?

If you think one or both of your ears is blocked, see your GP or Practice Nurse. Do not poke anything into your ear canals. Do not use ear drops, unless your Doctor or ENT Nurse Practitioner has prescribed them.

It is possible to buy products designed to help soften your ear wax. Some of these products may actually irritate your ears and cause inflammation or swelling in the ear canal (Otitis Externa).

If you have a history of ear perforation, only use drops under the advice of your ENT Nurse Practitioner or Doctor.

## Questions? Make a note here

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Mid Cheshire Hospitals **NHS**  
NHS Foundation Trust

## What is Ear Wax?

This leaflet is available in audio, large print, braille and other languages. To request a copy telephone **01270 273104**.

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## What is ear wax?

Ear wax is also known as Cerumen. It is made up of oil and sweat secreted from glands in your outer ear canal, skin, hair and dust particles.

Wax helps keep your ears healthy. It is anti-fungal and anti-bacterial. Some people feel that they should clean their ears regularly, but there is usually no need for ear wax to be cleared. You do not need to wash, scrape or poke wax out of your ears because the wax, along with the skin, usually falls out without you noticing.

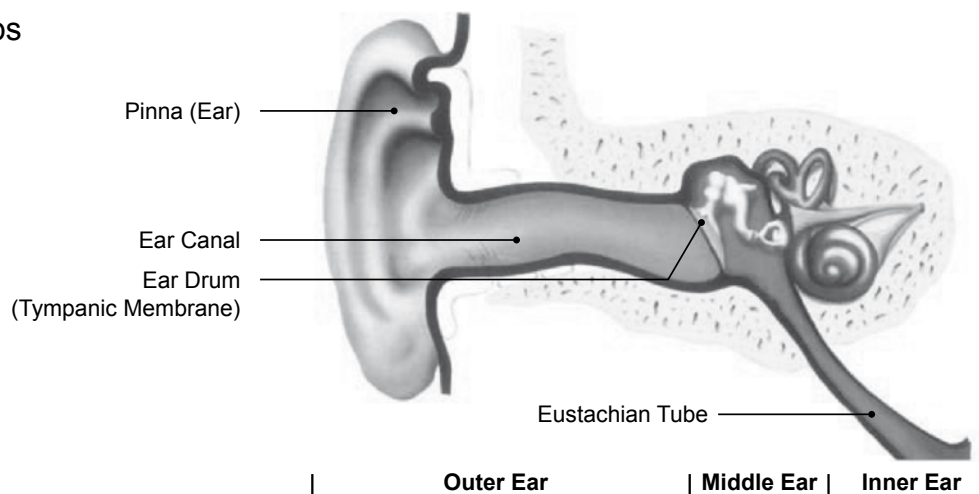
Your external ear canal keeps itself clean using a natural process, involving ear wax. It takes about two weeks for skin to move outwards from your eardrum to your external ear. This process goes on all the time and means that your ear canal is continually cleaning itself.

## What causes wax blockages?

Occasionally, wax can build up in your ear canal and cause a blockage. A number of things may cause this.

**You may find that ear wax is more a problem if you:**

- Have narrow ear canals
- Work in a dusty or dirty environment
- Wear earplugs/ear protection a lot
- Wear a hearing aid
- Use cotton buds



## Looking after your ears

You can help to prevent wax blockages forming in the first place by looking after your ears.

**NEVER** poke anything in your ears such as fingers, cotton buds, matches or hair grips. Scraping the ear canal in such a way can actually encourage your wax glands to produce more wax, and may cause damage to your ears, and disturb the natural cleaning mechanism. Try to avoid very dusty, dirty or smoky places as these things can combine with wax to form a blockage.

Olive Oil drops or spray can encourage the natural movement of wax from the outer ear, but will not clean the ear itself. For details please ask your ENT Nurse Practitioner, Doctor or Pharmacist.