

EARWAX

Wax is produced by the ear to protect the canal leading from the eardrum to the outside. Overproduction of earwax (cerumen) can cause blockage of the external ear canal.

Signs & Symptoms:

- Decreased hearing
- Ear pain
- Plugged feeling in the ear
- Ringing in the ear

Risk Increases With:

- Exposure to dust or debris
- Family history of earwax blockage
- Cleaning with Q-tips and impacting the wax

Treatment:

Buy non-prescription wax-softening ear drops and a soft rubber bulb syringe. Both are available at the SHS pharmacy for about \$5.00. Lie down on your side with the affected ear toward the ceiling. Pull the top of the ear gently up and back toward the back of the head. Instill 5-6 drops into the ear and remain still (lying down) for a few minutes. Plug the ear with cotton. Leave the drops in – preferably overnight, but not more than 12 hours. Repeat for 3-4 days.

Then, to remove wax, use the bulb syringe to gently irrigate the ear canal with plain warm water of equal parts of warm water and hydrogen peroxide (lean the affected side over a sink or basin while flushing the ear). Repeat irrigations until the ear feels clear. If the ear doesn't clear, then make an appointment at the Nurse's Clinic at Student Health.

Do not try to remove wax with a stick or cotton swab. This usually packs the wax into the back of the ear, or can damage the eardrum or cause an infection in the ear canal.

CAUTION: If you think you may have a perforated eardrum, DO NOT try to remove wax. A sign of perforation can be bloody or pus-like discharge from the ear accompanied by pain.

SEEK ATTENTION if you have symptoms of an earwax blockage that does not clear despite the treatment described above. Signs of ear infection: fever, pain, drainage or tenderness accompanying the earwax blockage. Do not attempt to irrigate the ear or use Q-tips.

Ear irrigation is done by appointment. To arrange a date and time, sign up in Nurses Clinic or call (858) 246-0477.



**Student Health
Nurse's Clinic**