



# Excess Earwax

Patient and Family Education

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**This teaching sheet contains general information only. Your child's doctor or a member of your child's health care team will talk with you about specific care for your child.**

## **What is excess earwax?**

Earwax is a normal product that the body makes in the ear canal. It helps to protect and moisturize the ear canal. Too much wax or old, hardened earwax can sometimes cause problems. This can happen when someone tries to get it out with a cotton swab or other object and pushes it in by mistake.

## **What are the possible symptoms?**

Your child may have no symptoms or may have:

- Temporary hearing loss caused by tightly packed earwax
- Ear "popping"
- Ear itching or irritation

## **When should earwax be removed?**

Earwax does not usually need to be removed from the ears. It should be removed if:

- It causes hearing problems or discomfort.
- Your child has a problem with repeated ear infections, so the doctor can check the ear more easily.

## **How is excess earwax treated?**

**If your child has had tubes in his ears, check with your child's doctor before using any of these treatments.**

Some general guidelines to follow include:

- You may use over-the-counter earwax removal drops, liquid colace or salt water (saline) solution. Colace is a medicine normally used to soften bowel movements (stool).
- You may also use hydrogen peroxide or warm mineral oil to loosen the earwax in the ear canal. Your child's doctor can explain how to do this to you.
- After softening the wax with peroxide or mineral oil, rinse gently with a bulb syringe filled with lukewarm water. Cold water can cause dizziness.

## **How can I help prevent excess earwax?**

- Use one to two drops of peroxide in each ear 1 to 2 times per week if advised by your child's doctor.
- Do not clean the ear with cotton swabs, such as Q-tips.

## **When should I call the doctor?**

Call your child's doctor if your child has any of these:

- Bleeding or pus draining from the ear canal
- Any hearing problems
- Ear pain

Also call if you have any questions or concerns about how your child looks or feels.

**In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.**