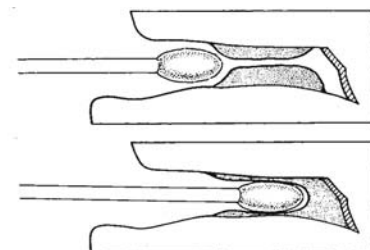


What Do You Know About Cerumen?

1. What is Cerumen?

Cerumen (commonly known as earwax) is the secretion of ear canal, containing grease and anti-bacterial enzyme. It protects the skin of the ear canal. As the ceruminous glands concentrate at the outer one-third of ear canal, cerumen usually accumulates at the side of the ear canal.



2. Should We Pick Our Ears Often?

In normal circumstances, cerumen will be expelled from the ear canal as the ear canal epithelium migrates outwards. Therefore, you need not remove it intentionally.

Picking your ears with cotton buds, earpicks or other hard objects may push the earwax deeper into the canal, thus causing blockage in the ear canal, leading to discomfort and hearing loss. Picking your ears by yourself may hurt the skin of the outer ear canal. If you have a fall or a bump when you are picking your ear, you may even hurt the eardrum and the middle ear. Picking earwax with unsanitary tools is a common cause for infection of the outer ear.

The cotton wool on the cotton bud may fall off inside the canal and affects the ear adversely.

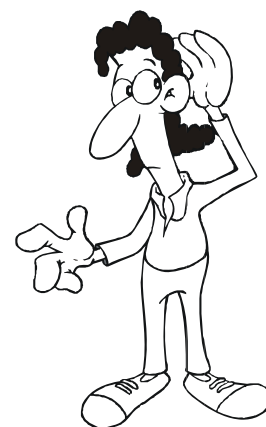
3. Will Cerumen Affect Our Hearing?

Blockage of the outer ear canal by cerumen is a typical cause for conductive hearing loss.

A small or moderate quantity of cerumen would not reduce hearing capacity.

However, when the ear canal is totally blocked by cerumen, it may lead to conductive hearing loss and hearing discomfort. The typical circumstances are as follows:

- ★ Persons suffering from excessive cerumen, particularly oily cerumen, and slow migration of the skin cells of the outer ear canal has a poorer ability in expelling cerumen. Therefore, cerumen may accumulate at the outer ear canal to form a cerumen plug and block the ear canal. This will cause hearing impairment, a feeling of blockage and itchiness, and even tinnitus.
- ★ Water gets in the ear canal after swimming or washing hair. Cerumen swells upon absorption of water and blocks the ear canal completely. The person may get impaired hearing and earache suddenly. However, this will recover when the canal becomes dry.



4. How to Prevent Cerumen Blockage?

- ★ Do not pick your ears, especially not with earpicks or other hard objects to avoid injury.
- ★ Keep your ear canal dry and clean when swimming or washing your hair. You may put earplugs or cotton balls to prevent inflow of dirty water. Dry your ears with dry cloth or cotton ball afterwards.

5. How to Manage Cerumen Blockage?

- ★ Consult health care personnel immediately when you find any hearing loss and hearing discomfort.
- ★ Some cases of discomfort and hearing loss, which are purely related to cerumen obstruction, may favourably improve after using cerumen softener (e.g. olive oil).
- ★ Ask health care personnel for help to remove the cerumen if your situation has not improved after using cerumen softener.



6. How to Use Cerumen Softener?

- ★ Clean your hands first
- ★ Use cotton balls to clean outer ears
- ★ Hold the bottle of softener in your palm for several minutes to warm the bottle to near body temperature
- ★ Lie on the bed/sofa sideways with the ear to be treated facing upward
- ★ Pull your ear slightly upward and backward to straighten your ear canal
- ★ Drip the prescribed quantity of cerumen softener into the ear canal
- ★ After that, press down the triangular cartilage (tragus) at the entrance of ear canal and rub it slightly
- ★ Keep your position for two minutes
- ★ Stand up slowly with a towel pressed to the ear

