

Earwax build-up

Earwax normally just falls out on its own. When it's blocking your ears a pharmacist or GP can help.

Symptoms of earwax buildup

If your ear is blocked with earwax you can have:

- a sore ear (earache)
- difficulty hearing
- itchiness
- dizziness
- an ear infection
- sounds such as high-pitched tones coming from inside the ear (tinnitus)

When the earwax is removed, these symptoms usually improve. Speak to your GP if you still have symptoms.

Causes of earwax buildup

Some people get earwax buildup because they naturally produce more earwax.

You can also get earwax buildup if you:

- have narrow ear canals, which link the eardrum and outer ear
- have a lot of ear hair
- are age 60 or older, as earwax gets harder with age
- wear hearing aids or earplugs - these can push the wax further in

Treating earwax buildup yourself

Earwax usually falls out on its own. If it does not, put 2 to 3 drops of olive oil or almond oil in your ear 2 times a day for a few days. The earwax should fall out over the next 2 weeks. It usually comes out when you're lying down.

If you are treating the earwax buildup yourself:

Don't

- ✗ do not use your fingers or other objects like cotton buds to remove earwax - this will push the wax in and make it worse
- ✗ do not use vegetable oils in your ears as they can cause an allergic reaction for some people

There's no evidence that ear candles or ear vacuums get rid of earwax.

How a pharmacist can help with earwax buildup

A pharmacist can give you advice and suggest treatments for earwax buildup.

They might recommend drops to dissolve the earwax. The earwax should fall out on its own or dissolve after about a week.

Do not use drops if you have a hole in your eardrum (a perforated eardrum).

Speak to your GP if:

- your ear has not cleared after 5 days
- your ear is badly blocked and you cannot hear properly - you can get an infection if it is not cleared

 [Find a GP](#)

How a GP can help with earwax buildup

Your GP may:

- flush the wax out with water (ear irrigation)
- suck the wax out (microsuction)

These treatments are usually painless.

Preventing earwax buildup

You cannot prevent earwax from building up. The wax is there to protect your ears from dirt and

germs. But you can keep using ear drops to soften it. This will help it fall out on its own and should prevent blocked ears.

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