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## Ear discharge

Ear discharge is drainage of blood, ear wax, pus, or fluid from the ear.

### Causes

Most of the time, any fluid leaking out of an ear is ear wax.

A ruptured eardrum can cause a white, slightly bloody, or yellow discharge from the ear. Dry crusted material on a child's pillow is often a sign of a ruptured eardrum. The eardrum may also bleed.

Causes of a ruptured eardrum include:

- Foreign object in the ear canal
- Injury from a blow to the head, foreign object, very loud noises, or sudden pressure changes (such as in airplanes)
- Inserting cotton-tipped swabs or other small objects into the ear
- Middle ear infection

Other causes of ear discharge include:

- Eczema and other skin irritations in the ear canal
- Swimmer's ear with symptoms such as itching, scaling, a red or moist ear canal, and pain that increases when you move the earlobe
- Normal ear wax

### Home Care

Caring for ear discharge at home depends on the cause.

### When to Contact a Medical Professional

Contact your health care provider if:

- The discharge is white, yellow, clear, or bloody.
- The discharge is the result of an injury.
- The discharge has lasted more than 5 days.

- There is severe pain.
- The discharge is associated with other symptoms, such as fever or headache.
- There is loss of hearing.
- There is redness or swelling coming out of the ear canal.
- Facial weakness or asymmetry

## What to Expect at Your Office Visit

The provider will perform a physical exam and look inside the ears. You may be asked questions, such as:

- When did the ear drainage begin?
- What does it look like?
- How long has it lasted?
- Does it drain all the time or off-and-on?
- What other symptoms do you have (for example, fever, ear pain, headache, or hearing loss)?

The provider may take a sample of the ear drainage and send it to a lab for examination.

The provider may recommend anti-inflammatory or antibiotic medicines, which are liquid drops placed in the ear. Antibiotics may be given by mouth if a ruptured eardrum from an ear infection is causing the discharge.

The provider may remove wax or infectious material from the ear canal using a small vacuum suction.

## Alternative Names

Drainage from the ear; Otorrhea; Ear bleeding; Bleeding from ear

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