



DELAWARE MODERN PEDIATRICS, P. A.

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Ear wax

Ear wax (cerumen) generally does not pose a medical problem, even if the amount seems excessive. Excessive ear wax does not cause middle ear infections, and is only rarely involved in swimmer's ear. It is unusual for excessive ear wax to cause hearing problems in children (although this is a more common problem in adults). So there's usually not much medical reason for parents to clean their children's ears, though the wax may be unattractive.

Folklore would have us clean ears with a cotton swab or Q-tip. Unfortunately, this is a bad way to clean the ears; the cotton swab often pushes the wax farther back into the ear canal, which may form a ball that is difficult to remove. I don't recommend cleaning ears with cotton swabs.

Sometimes I will recommend rinsing the ears regularly, since removing excess ear wax might allow me to see eardrums that might otherwise be difficult to examine in the office. If your baby's ears get waxy, I suggest that you run clean water into the ears at bath time, to loosen the wax and perhaps flush some of it out. Folklore says that water in the ear canals might cause an ear infection, but fortunately this is not true.

Medical treatments such as Debrox (from your pharmacy) can be used to soften and flush the wax. Hydrogen peroxide (from the pharmacy) is also effective, though some kids don't like the "fizzy" feeling in their ears. You have to be diligent about using them regularly, even several times a week if needed.

If you really want to get "down and dirty" with the earwax, check out this detailed article. This fellow recommends using hydrogen peroxide with a battery-operated WaterPik:

<https://eversmarterworld.wordpress.com/2011/11/23/rapid-ear-wax-removal-system-the-best-home-solution-by-far/>

– David Epstein, MD