

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT EAR WAX – AND MORE!

How many different kinds of wax can you think of? There's car wax, floor wax, waxed paper, beauty wax for removing unwanted hair, furniture wax – even hot pepper was for repelling ants and other garden pests.

There there's ear wax. This oily, sticky, yellowish substance is produced in the ear canal by the cerumen glands. Its purpose is to make it possible for you to hear. It also prevents damage to the ear drum and ear canal by keeping bits of dirt, dust, water, insects, bacteria and other foreign objects out of the ears.

Although hearing loss is common as people grow older, hearing difficulties are often caused by a simple, treatable ear wax problem: earwax.

As people age wax often blocks the ear canal and prevents normal hearing. Older adults frequently complain that they can't hear what people are saying. They constantly turn up the radio or TV sound because of the significant accumulation of ear wax. An overabundance of ear wax also interferes with telephone calls and conversations.

When you parent does talk on the phone he may not understand what the caller is saying because of the accumulation of war wax that's blocking one or both ears. As your parent ages he worries that he is becoming deaf and will soon need a hearing aid. Because he can't see the inside of his ears your parent has no idea that it is the excessive amount of ear wax that is interfering with her phone conversations – she is not losing her hearing or becoming forgetful.

The good news is that even though excessive ear wax is a common cause of poor hearing for many older adults, it can be treated effectively with a variety of lifestyle adjustments and home remedies.

TREATING EARS WITH KINDNESS!

An ear blocked with earwax is not a major ailment that requires bed rest, doctor visits, and lots of pills and potions but it sure is uncomfortable! As a family member who care for an older relative you would probably do just about anything to make him or her hear (and feel) better fast!

SYMPTOMS OF EAR WAS BLOCKAGE

The most common signs of an ear blocked with wax are:

- An earache with no other symptoms -- fever, chills or vomiting.
- A feeling of fullness in the affected ear.
- Tinnitus – buzzing or hissing sounds in the affected ear.
- Poor hearing in the affected ear.

A blocked ear is uncomfortable for almost everyone and is especially painful for older adults who must also cope with the pain of other ailments they may have. Crankiness is one way your parent tells you that she is uncomfortable. Spending some time with him or her will help you discover their discomfort.

REMOVING EAR WAX: HELP IS ON THE WAY!

A variety of ear wax removal remedies are available without prescriptions in most pharmacies. These medications usually come with a soft rubber bulb syringe and a small bottle of medicated drops that help soften and remove excessive ear wax.

It's often easier to apply the drops yourself, according to package directions, when your parent is lying on her side on the bed. Administer several drops of the medicine according to package directions. The drops should remain in the ear with small ball of cotton in the outer part of the ear for several minutes while the medicine softens the wax and can be flushed out of the ear with warm water and a small rubber bulb syringe that usually comes in the same package.

These products do remove ear wax for some people. In others it has no effect even when the treatment is repeated several times.

Home remedies safe for ear wax removal include baby or mineral oil applied to the affected ear or three to four drops of hydrogen peroxide or mineral oil applied to the affected ear followed by flushing out the affected ear with warm water.

If none of these remedies relieve your parent's discomfort, schedule an appointment with a nurse or a physician who will use professional instruments to remove the wax. These treatments are usually more successful at getting rid of earwax and are also more expensive than most over-the-counter remedies.

PREPARE FOR EAR WAX!

An ear (or ears) full of wax are not medical emergencies. They can, however, be a major, uncomfortable annoyance to older people – and their caregivers. Fortunately, at-home ear wax treatments are usually successful especially if you use them when your parent begins to complain about difficulty hearing. After one bout with an earful of wax you both will be sure to keep basic ingredients for home treatments in the medicine cabinet for the next time you need to “clean your ears!” [792/2/7/2011]