

Cerumen Impactions (Ear Wax Buildup)

Cerumen Impaction (ear wax buildup) refers to the buildup of layers of earwax within the ear canal to the point of blocking the canal. It can also put pressure on the eardrum and cause pain. Cerumen impaction is often caused by misguided attempts to remove earwax or years of buildup without coming in to get it medically removed.

Cerumen impaction develops when earwax accumulates in the inner part of the ear canal and blocks the eardrum. The wax traps sand or dust particles before they reach the eardrum. It also protects the outer part of the ear canal because it repels water. As the older cerumen (wax) reaches the opening of the ear, it dries out and falls away.

Cerumen impaction may cause hearing loss, discomfort and a mild infection. For most patients, it is not an issue, but for others, periodic cleanings are helpful. Ear candling, q-tips and ear syringes may not be that helpful.

We do recommend the use of hydrogen peroxide for loosening and liquefying cerumen impactions, especially before coming in for a cleaning. This technique should be approved by Dr. Sewell before trying this at home, as it is not appropriate for everybody.

If you wear hearing aids or any type of ear plugs, it is important to have your ears cleaned every six months. Some people require more frequent visits depending on their production of wax. Another very effective tool in keeping your hearing aids cleaned and free from moisture is to obtain a dehumidifier to place your aids in when you are not wearing them. For more information, feel free to contact our office.