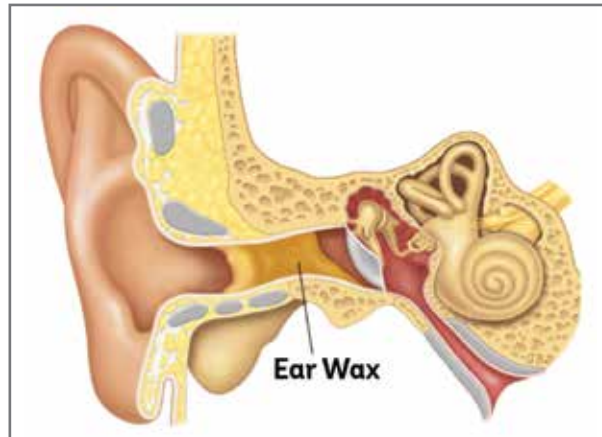


All you need to know about earwax!

Earwax, also known as cerumen, is something that all of us have and is produced to protect the ear canal, assists in cleaning and lubrication, and also provides a degree of protection against bacteria, fungi, water and insects (yes, we do have to remove them sometimes). When the jaw moves, the natural cleaning process achieved by wax is helped. Wax, therefore, is very important for the good health of our ears. However, from time to time it can become excessive or compacted and can cause hearing loss due to it blocking sounds from reaching the eardrum.

Earwax comes in two types – wet and dry. Your type depends by and large on your genetic makeup. Those from North-eastern Asia, especially from China, Korea and Japan are more likely to have dry ear wax, while earwax for most people in other regions tends to be wet. (Interestingly, the gene responsible for people having dry earwax is also responsible for them having less body odour than those with wet earwax!).

Scientists have also discovered that earwax can help in the diagnosis of certain diseases. There are two odour-producing metabolic diseases that you probably have never heard of – maple syrup urine disease and alkaptonuria, that can be identified in earwax before being diagnosed using traditional blood and urine



analysis. Also, odours in earwax can often tell us what a person has eaten or where in the world they have been.

Some people who suffer from tinnitus might complain that their symptoms have been worse after having their ears syringed to remove earwax. The reason for this, generally, is that the earwax has blocked the ear, reducing the sound reaching the eardrum. The increased loudness of sound after wax removal can increase the awareness of tinnitus, but this is usually only temporarily. On the other hand, some tinnitus sufferers find that their symptoms are more troublesome when there is a build-up of wax in their ears.

It is not necessary to remove wax unless it becomes excessive or is affecting your hearing. When it does, there are a number of things you can do. Softeners are available from high-street pharmacies and can be effective if the wax build up isn't too

great, **but one thing you should never do is to use cotton buds or anything similar to clean your ears, as these will serve to compact the wax and push it nearer to the eardrum.** Many GP practices will offer ear syringing, which pumps warm water into the ear to loosen and remove the wax. If the wax is compacted, you might need to have it removed at an ENT clinic, where they are trained to use a 'pick' or a 'curette' to remove it. **Ear candles, which some advocate, are not recommended as they are both very dangerous and totally ineffective.**

Interestingly, earwax has been useful to anthropologists for studying mankind's early migratory patterns!

Our Audiologists at Correct Hearing have been trained to use the very latest technology – **Endoscopic Ear Wax Removal (E-suction)**, which gently vacuums wax out of the ear under direct vision using a specially designed endoscope. This is another area where the Correct Hearing Healthcare service goes beyond the sale and fitting of hearing aids. ■

This is another area where the Correct Hearing Healthcare service goes beyond just the sale and fitting of hearing aids.

To make an appointment please phone **0115 961 8351** or email **info@correcthearing.co.uk**

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