

## HOW TO SAFELY CLEAN YOUR EARS

The reason we feel tempted to clean our ears is because of that substance called cerumen, commonly called earwax. It's normal for your body to produce it, and it actually helps protect and lubricate your ears. It even has antibacterial properties, which means your ears are self-cleaning.

Earwax is like a filter for your ears, keeping out harmful things like dirt and dust, and trapping them so they don't go deep inside.

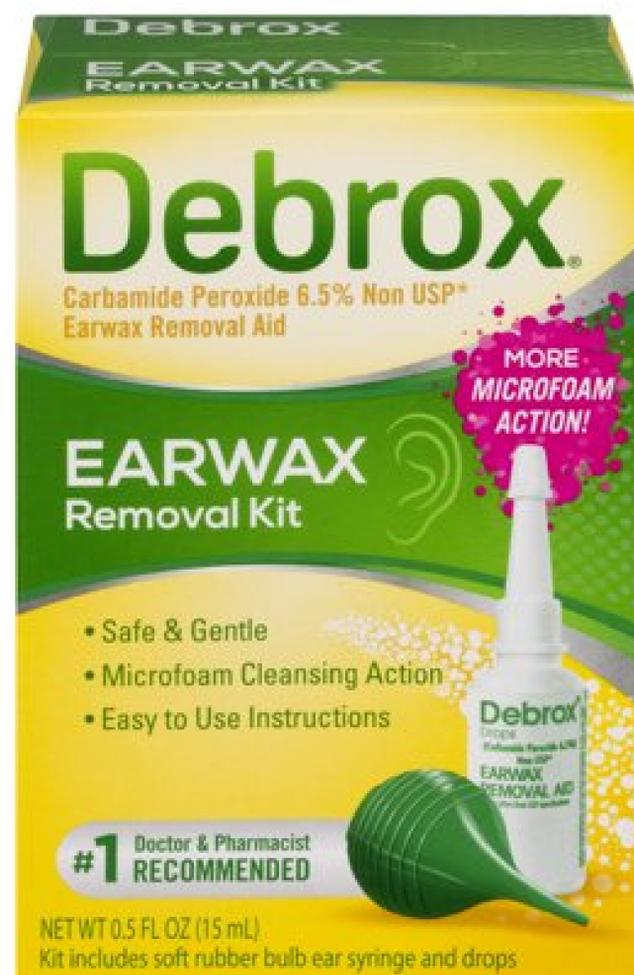
If too much earwax builds up and starts to cause symptoms or it keeps your doctor from doing a proper ear exam, you might have something called cerumen impaction. This means earwax has completely filled your ear canal and it can happen in one or both ears. This kind of earwax buildup is rare, but it can happen.

The first step is to schedule an appointment with a doctor. Your doctor can look into your ear canal with a special device and remove any earwax with small instruments, suction, or irrigation.

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If your problem isn't serious, but you do feel like you have too much earwax buildup, you can gently clean the outside of your ears. Just use a washcloth. You also can try putting a few drops of baby oil, mineral oil, or glycerin in your ear to soften the wax.

Or you can use an over-the-counter wax removal kit like  
Debrox.



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Besides cotton swabs or any other small or pointy objects, **DO NOT** use these to clean your ears:

- **Hydrogen peroxide.** If the problem isn't an earwax buildup, but something more serious, peroxide can make the problem much worse.
- **Ear candles.** Studies show they're not effective and they can even cause injury. These hollow candles are supposed to be inserted into the ear canal and lit at the exposed end, but the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has found they can cause burns and even pierce the inside of the ear.

Schedule your ear cleaning today!