Cerumen Plug (Wax In Ear Canal)

A cerumen plug is having too much wax in your ear canal. The outer ear canal is lined with hairs and glands that secrete wax. This wax is called *cerumen*. This protects the ear canal. It also helps prevent material from entering the ear. Too much wax can cause a feeling of fullness in the ears, decreased hearing, ringing in the ears, or an earache. Sometimes your caregiver will remove a cerumen plug with an instrument called a curette. Or he/she may flush the ear canal with warm water from a syringe to remove the wax. You may simply be sent home to follow the home care instructions below for wax removal.

Generally ear wax does not have to be removed unless it is causing a problem such as one of those listed above. When too much wax is causing a problem, the following are a few home remedies which can be used to help this problem.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Put a couple drops of glycerin, baby oil, or mineral oil in the ear a couple times of day. Do this every day for several days. After putting the drops in, you will need to lay with the affected ear pointing up for a couple minutes. This allows the drops to remain in the canal and run down to the area of wax blockage. This will soften the wax plug. It may also make your hearing worse as the wax softens and blocks the canal even more.
- After a couple days, you may gently flush the ear canal with warm water from a syringe. Do this by pulling your ear up and back with your head tilted slightly forward and towards a pan to catch the water. This is most easily done with a helper. You can also accomplish the same thing by letting the shower beat into your ear canal to wash the wax out. Sometimes this will not be immediately successful. You will have to return to the first step of using the oil to further soften the wax. Then resume washing the ear canal out with a syringe or shower.
- Following removal of the wax, put ten to twenty drops of rubbing alcohol into the outer ears. This will dry the canal and prevent an infection.
- Do not irrigate or wash out your ears if you have had a perforated ear drum or mastoid surgery.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- **You are unsuccessful with the above instructions for home care.**
- **You develop ear pain or drainage from the ear.**

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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