

## IS IT TRUE THAT I SHOULDN'T USE Q-TIPS TO CLEAN MY EARS?



### **The answer is YES! You probably should not put anything in your ear that is smaller than your fist.**

In order to understand why you don't need to swab out your ears, we first need to understand why we have earwax to begin with. That gross gunk, medically known as cerumen, is actually there for protection. The purpose of earwax is to keep your ear canals clean.

Not only is earwax a dust and dirt deterrent, it also provides some antibacterial and lubricating perks. Amazingly enough, your ears basically clean themselves. When earwax dries, every motion of your jaw, whether that is chowing down on a delicious lunch or chatting away with good friends, helps move the old earwax out of the opening of your ear.

The problem, is when we think we are smarter than the very complex and well designed systems our bodies have had in place since the beginning of time. When we go poking around in those ears of ours with cotton swabs, we are actually pushing the ear wax deeper into the ear canal. When we do this, the earwax gets stuck in the parts of the ear that *don't* clean themselves.

Pushing earwax deeper inside can block the ear canal, leading to hearing loss, or, if pushed further, a ruptured ear drum. This trapped earwax can also lead to fungus and bacterial infections which seem a little bit more than painful.

Ears really only need to be cleaned, even by a medical professional, if they feel full or if you notice changes in your hearing that could be related to a wax buildup. According to an article by *The Huffington Post*, about 12 million Americans a year head to their doctors with "excessive or impacted cerumen," a really gross sounding way of saying they have a serious earwax problem. Those checkups lead to about 8 million yearly earwax removal procedures performed by medical professionals.

Yes, we know what you are thinking, with a look of disgust on your face – I can't just stop cleaning my ears! For those of you who cannot just leave your ears alone, Douglas Backous, M.D., chair of the hearing committee of AAO-HNSF recommends an at home remedy. A few drops of this mixture consists of one part white vinegar, one part rubbing alcohol and one part tap water at body temperature. Ultimately, there is nothing good about putting anything in your ears.

Next time, remember to read the advised instructions on the website for *Q-tips*, which states, “use around the outer ear only, without entering the ear canal.”

Your ears will thank you!

To learn additional tips on how to protect your ears, contact us at Landmark Hearing. Please call today at **(408) 773-9933** or set up an appointment online at <http://www.landmarkhearing.com/appointments/>.

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