

DAVID M. DAVIS, M.D., P.C.  
JEFFREY S. WEINGARTEN, M.D.  
C. BART DICKSON, M.D.  
WALTER M. BELENKY, M.D.  
MICHAEL E. STONE, M.D.

OTOLARYNGOLOGY, HEAD AND NECK SURGERY  
FACIAL PLASTIC SURGERY  
SINUS SURGERY, SLEEP APNEA SURGERY  
AND VOICE DISORDERS

PROVIDENCE MEDICAL BUILDING  
22250 PROVIDENCE DRIVE  
SUITE 301  
SOUTHFIELD, MI 48075  
TEL: (248) 569-5985  
FAX: (248) 569-3704

17940 FARMINGTON ROAD  
SUITE 120  
LIVONIA, MI 48152  
TEL: (248) 569-5985

21603 ELEVEN MILE ROAD  
ST. CLAIR SHORES, MI 48081  
TEL: (248) 569-5985

PROVIDENCE MEDICAL CENTER  
PROVIDENCE PARK  
26850 PROVIDENCE PKWY  
SUITE 165  
NOVI, MI 48374  
TEL: (248) 569-5985  
FAX: (248) 349-7318

## CERUMEN – EARWAX

### What is it?

The ear canal is lined with hair follicles and glands that produce a yellow, brown, waxy oil called cerumen (earwax). This material protects the ear by trapping dust, debris, bacteria and foreign particles preventing them from damaging the eardrum. The earwax is made of chemicals, which both moisten the ear canal skin and kill germs.

### Why is cerumen (earwax) a problem?

Earwax is made only at the very openings of the ear canal. In most people, earwax makes its way to the opening of the ear canal where it falls out or is washed away. In some people, the glands produce more wax, or a thicker wax, than the ear can naturally excrete. The aging process seems to thicken the earwax. Earwax blockage can cause hearing loss (temporary), noises in the ear (ringing or tinnitus), ear pain or a fullness or pressure sensation in the ear. Any wax buildup in the ear canal can predispose the canal to become infected.

### Treatment:

In many cases earwax blockage can be treated at home. Placing five drops of baby oil or mineral oil in the ear 30 minutes before showering will help soften the wax and aid in its removal. This should be done no more than one or two times each month. Over-the-counter products such as Debrox, Murine Eardrops or diluted Hydrogen Peroxide can be used, but they are chemicals which must be thoroughly removed from the ear canal to prevent potential ear canal damage. Home remedies such as “candling” may be dangerous. **Never place any non-prescribed eardrops into the ear if there is a hole in the eardrum. If in doubt, you must have an examination by your physician first.**

Q-Tips, bobby pins, keys or other instruments should never be placed in the ear. They can worsen the problem by pushing the wax against the eardrum. They can also cause damage to the ear canal or put a hole in the eardrum. They can do damage to the ear bones or inner ear resulting in permanent deafness, dizziness or ringing.

### When is an office visit necessary?

Call your physician when the above methods do not work or if new symptoms such as drainage, ear pain, fever, or persistent hearing loss occur. Your physician has the benefit of directly visualizing the ear canal and removing wax in a safe and gentle manner. To clean the ear canal, your physician may use special instruments, which allow your physician to gently remove the wax. Suction or irrigation are two other choices for removing earwax that are available to your physician.

### Prevention:

Once the wax blockage has been removed, some people may require the use of mineral oil or baby oil to prevent further wax buildup. Five drops of this oil should be placed into the ear canal one or two times each month to prevent wax buildup. Whenever the ear becomes plugged, it should be cleaned to prevent hearing loss or infection. If your attempts at home are unsuccessful, a physician’s examination is required. Do not use this oil if there is a hole in the eardrum.

**As in any medical condition, should you not respond rapidly to care, or should you have any questions or concerns regarding your care or medical condition, you should consult your physician.**