

# EARWAX

Ear wax is produced naturally by the ear to protect the canal leading from the eardrum to the outside. Overproduction of earwax (cerumen) can cause blockage of the external ear canal. Ear lavage/irrigation is often used to gently remove this impacted wax.

## Signs & Symptoms of a wax build up

- Decreased hearing
- Ear pain
- Plugged or full feeling in the ear
- Ringing in the ear (tinnitus)

## Treatment

- Please make an appointment to see your Primary Care Provider (PCP) to have your situation evaluated (especially if you are experiencing pain or discharge); or come into Urgent Care and have a triage nurse assess your ear for you.
- **Please do not use Q-tips as they will push the wax further into the ear canal.**
- You can purchase **wax-softening ear drops** from any pharmacy (also available at the SHS Pharmacy).
- Lie on your side with the affected ear toward the ceiling.
- Instill **5-6 drops into the ear** and remain lying down for a few minutes.
- Plug the ear with cotton.
- Leave the drops in and **repeat 2-3 times a day** for a **MINIMUM OF 3 DAYS** to soften the wax.
- Make an appointment in the Nurses' Clinic at Student Health for ear lavage/irrigation to remove the now softened wax.
- Failure to soften the wax prior to the appointment can result in damage to the eardrum or having to re-schedule your appointment.

## What to expect with Ear Lavage

- Ear irrigation may be uncomfortable but is not usually painful.
- Occasionally irrigation may make you feel dizzy or faint.
- Let the person performing the irrigation know if you have had any signs of infection in the ear such as fever, pain, drainage or tenderness, or if you have had previous surgery in your ear.

If you are troubled by regular plugs of earwax, you may wish to try using ear drops on a regular basis to see if this helps prevent the problem.