

Cerumen Impaction

What is it?

- **Cerumen** – naturally occurring, normally extruded product of the external auditory canal, usually asymptomatic (earwax)



- **Composed of**- secretions and sloughed epithelial cells and hair from the external auditory canal, protects the skin in the canal, may accumulate causing discomfort, hearing loss, tinnitus, dizziness and chronic cough, can contribute to otitis externa, cardiac depression
- **If Impacted**- causes complications as hearing loss, pain, dizziness, ringing in the ears, can interfere with examinations of the tympanic membrane

Facts:

- **Cerumen Impaction**-is present in 10% of children, 5% of healthy adults, 57% of older patients in nursing homes, 36% of patients with mental retardation
 - **Increased Incidence**- anatomic deformity, increase number of hairs in the external auditory canal, physical barriers to natural wax extrusions (cotton swabs, hearing aids, earplug-type hearing protectors, earplugs), do not use cotton swabs

What can I do?

- **See your Health Care Provider**- watchful waiting, manual removal, the use of ceruminolytic agents, irrigation with or without ceruminolytic pretreatment, may need to be referred to a otolaryngologist
 - **Manual Removal is Not Possible**- if patient develops severe pain, has vertigo during irrigation, or hearing loss is still present after the cerumen has been removed avoid using cotton swabs and ear candles
 - **Cerumen Impaction**- is diagnosed by direct visualization with an otoscope, common cause of hearing impairment
 - **Earwax Buildup**- your health care provider can remove the wax buildup with an ear spoon, use ear drops to soften the wax, wash out the ears with water

