

Earwax – It Deserves a Better Reputation!

By Crystal Chalmers, Au.D.

Though its medical name is cerumen, most of us refer to it as “Earwax”.

While I agree that neither term sounds very attractive, I will argue that earwax has gotten an undeserved bad reputation as something equivalent to dirt that we need to remove from our bodies.

So before reaching for the cotton swabs, you should know that earwax performs several important functions for our ears and hearing system.

That's right. Earwax – unless it is in excess and blocking our ear canal(s) or has plugged and disrupted the proper functioning of hearing technology – is a good thing.

Here are some positive functions of earwax:

- It provides a protective barrier to the skin of the ear canal
- Assists in lubricating and cleaning the outer portion of the ear canal.
- Provides protection against insects (it is a natural insecticide), fungi, and bacteria – all of which like to dwell in dark, moist places ... just like the ear canal!

So don't be so quick to want to remove all of your earwax. Oftentimes, excess earwax will work its way to the outer portion of the ear canal and simply fall out on its own. To clean your ears, NEVER use cotton swabs as these can push the wax down further into the ear canal. Simply rinse your ears with warm water while showering and/or use a damp cloth with mild soap to gently wash the exterior of the ear. In cases where earwax is excessive, it should only be removed by a medical doctor as this is a delicate procedure. In fact the ear canal is the only place on the body where skin is in direct contact with bone, so improper cleaning of this area could result in infection with serious consequences.

Want to learn more about topics like these pertaining to your hearing health? Sign-up for one of our monthly “Lunch & Learn” seminars. For more information about these seminars, visit our Internet Website at www.nsaudiology.com. Click on “News & Events” or call us toll free at (888) ... Because hearing is a wonderful gift!