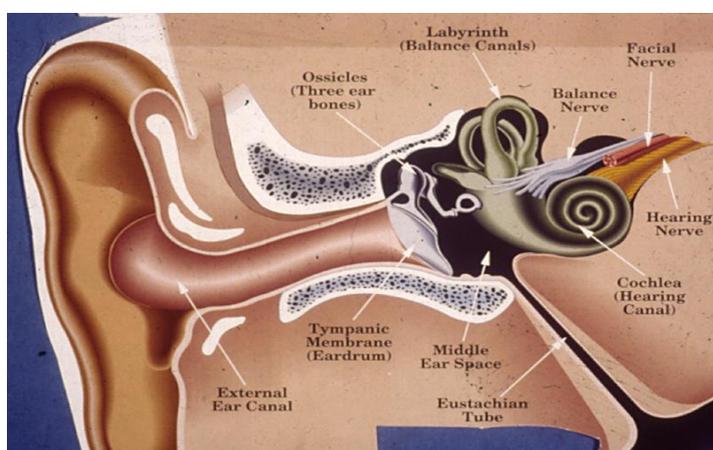


## Ear care

In all other parts of the body, the superficial skin (the squamous epithelium) is constantly shed, usually as a result of friction from clothing or washing. This is not possible in the ear, so the ear cleans itself! Skin cells in the ear are formed at the ear drum and then they gradually move out along the ear canal. In the outer third of the ear canal there are sebaceous glands (sweat glands) which secrete cerumen. The cerumen mixes with the skin cells and this in turn forms ear wax. Most of the ear wax eventually falls out of the ears as the skin cells move out along the ear canal. Some wax in the ear canal is good, as it keeps the delicate skin of the ear canal moist and also can trap dirt and insects from entering the ear canal.



When you have ichthyosis, you have continual and widespread scaling of the skin. This can apply to the ears too. The skin scales in the ear can build up, block the ear canals and in some cases the hearing can be affected. The hearing is affected, as the sound waves cannot pass through the wax and therefore the hearing is not as good. Sometimes the skin in the ear can be managed by applying regular softening drops such as olive oil in the hope that the skin scales eventually fall out of the ear canal. If this doesn't occur, it may be necessary for the skin scales and wax to be removed. This needs to be done either at the G.P's or in an Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) Department.



It is difficult to say how often that the ears will need to be cleaned out, as everyone is different. I would suggest that you try a monthly appointment and then alter accordingly.

If you feel that the hearing is affected, it would be advisable to have a hearing test.

### **Simple tips for ear care**

Don't use cotton buds. The reason for this is that you could push wax and skin back down the ear canal.

If you see any wax or skin debris, just wipe it away with a tissue.

Don't be tempted to try and remove skin debris yourself. If you make a sudden movement, when you are removing skin or wax from the ear, you could cause some damage.

When showering and washing hair, get some cotton wool, roll the cotton wool in some Vaseline to make a plug, put the plug in the outside of the ear and this will keep the ear waterproof.

It would be advisable to wear swimming plugs when swimming (or you could also use these when washing the hair). This is to keep the ear canal nice and dry and reduce the risk of infection.

If you think that the ears have got a little wet during hair washing or swimming, you can use a cool hair dryer to get rid of any moisture.