

The Waxy Stuff in my Ears

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Binky rushed to her mother. “Mom, something came out of my ear!” she exclaimed.

Mom looked worried. “Huh? What?”

“Here,” Binky said as she showed her mother a cotton ball. On the cotton ball was a small, hard object that looked like a small piece of cornflake.

Mom felt relieved when she saw the object. “Oh, that is hardened earwax,” she said. “You should not worry about it.”

“Wax?” asked Binky. “Why should my ears have wax? Is not wax only for polishing our floor?”

Mom laughed. “Earwax is not the same as the wax we use for the floor. Earwax is that yellowish, waxy substance found in the ear canal. Earwax is important to our ears.”



“Really, Mom?” asked Binky. “How can this yucky thing help our ears?”

“Earwax looks yucky, but without it, our ears will become dry and itchy. We may even get an ear infection or ear ache,” explained Mom. “You see, earwax traps the dirt, dust, and tiny insects that try


Fun Facts

- The outer ear canal is the area between the fleshy part of the ear on the outside of your head (the part you can see) and the middle ear.
- The tubelike ear canal is the passageway of the outer ear.
- The technical name for earwax is cerumen (say: suh-roo-mun).
- People who live in polluted places make more earwax.

to enter our ears. It protects and moisturizes the skin of the ear canal.”

Binky looked at the cotton ball she was holding. “I see, Mom,” she said. “But I wonder how our ears get earwax.”

Mom took the cotton ball from Binky and threw it into a nearby trash can. “Well, earwax is made in the outer ear canal,” she said. “There are sweat glands in the outer ear canal that make earwax. When earwax is first formed, it is soft and oily. Then it becomes hard and flaky. When it is hard, it goes out of the ear. That’s the hard, yellow thing you got on the cotton ball.”

“Earwax is interesting after all,” said Binky. “Thanks for telling me about it, Mom.” 

Sources

How does earwax appear in our ears? <<www.highlightskids.com/Science/ScienceQuestions/h1scienceQuestion22.asp>>

What’s Earwax? <<www.kidshhealth.org/kid/talk/yucky/earwax.html>>

Health Tip: Fluid in the Ear. <<www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=85410>>

Binky's Homework



Binky has an assignment about the ears. She decides to write something about earwax. She tries to recall what her mom told her before about earwax, but she forgot some of the information she learned. Help Binky finish her homework. Write the missing word or words to complete each sentence.

- Without earwax, our ears will become _____ and _____.
- Earwax protects and moisturizes the skin of the _____.
- When earwax is first formed, it is _____ and _____.
- Earwax is also called _____.
- _____ is a yellowish, waxy substance found in the ear canal.
- The _____ is part of the outer ear that looks like a tube.
- There skin in the outer ear canal has _____ that produce earwax.

Answers
 1. dry and itchy
 2. ear canal
 3. soft and oily
 4. cerumen
 5. earwax
 6. ear canal
 7. special glands

Earwax Detector

Would you like to be an earwax detective? As one, you will search for earwax! But you should have a tool to be able to do this. Let us call that tool the earwax detector.

You should also make that tool yourself. Do not worry. It is easy to make. Just ask your mom, dad, kuya, or ate for help.

What you will need:

- Plastic bottle
- Scissors
- Small flashlight or a penlight
- Plastic tape
- Paint and brush or permanent marker



What you will do:

1. Remove the cap of the plastic bottle. Then ask an adult (mom, dad, kuya, or ate) to cut off the top part of the plastic bottle. You should now have a bottle that looks like a funnel. Remember: make sure that the edge of the cut bottle top is smooth; a sharp edge can cut or hurt the ears.
2. Now ask an adult again to trim the top of the bottle. You have to keep on trimming until the bottle top fits snugly onto the end of the flashlight.



3. Paint the inside of the bottle top with dark paint or permanent marker (you can already do this). Allow the paint or marker to dry.
4. Attach the end of the flashlight to the top of the bottle. Secure it with the plastic tape.



Now you are ready to use your earwax detector. First, you should have someone as your “subject.” You will look into the right ear of your subject using your earwax detector. Remember to have an adult supervise you when you do your earwax search.

Now pinch the back of your subject’s ear flap, then pull it upward and toward the back of the head. This will straighten the ear canal.

Place your earwax detector up to the opening of the ear canal. Turn on the flashlight. Now you can start your search for earwax. Good luck!