



# 10 Top Tips for Healthy Ears

1. **If you have problem ears, keep them dry!** Bacteria like a moist environment so when showering or hair washing, use a piece of cotton wool coated with vaseline and fill the outer part of the ear (the concha). Research has found this to be the most effective at keeping out water when compared to earplugs as well as the preferred method.
2. **Never poke anything into your ears- including cotton buds.** The lining of the ear is delicate and can be easily damaged. The ear is also self cleaning and earwax is needed to protect the ear from dirt and dust. If you use a cotton bud to clean the ears you may find some wax is on the cotton bud, but the majority will be pushed into the ear canal. This means it can become harder to remove, it can also increase the production of earwax.
3. **Protect your ears from loud noise** – whether in the workplace, at home or out and about at concerts or nightclubs. Wear earplugs in loud environments and take regular breaks away from loud music. When listening to MP3 players, adopt the 60:60 rule - only use your MP3 player at 60% of its maximum volume for 60 minutes a day.
4. **To keep ears clean-** wash the visible part of the ear (the pinna) and behind the ear with slightly soapy fingers. Then wipe the soap away with rinsed fingers and dry with a thin towel. Do not poke the corner of the towel or flannel into the entrance to the ear canal.
5. **Rinse hair in fresh water when bathing.** Lying down to rinse hair can cause an infection to develop as there are always body bacteria in the bath water and these can become trapped behind any wax in the ear canal.
6. **Put a drop/spray of olive oil into each ear once a week if you have dry, itchy ears.** This is to lubricate both the skin of the ear canal and the earwax, encouraging natural movement of the wax out of the ear. Olive oil is anti-bacterial and anti-fungal and contains vitamin E which helps to heal skin. One of Deafness Research UK's advisors has found that this is of benefit for people with dry skin, also helping earwax to become softer.
7. **Avoid the common problem of ear pain when flying.** Ear pain can be alleviated in a number of ways, for example by chewing gum, swallowing water or

yawning regularly while the plane is descending.

8. **Don't ignore an ear problem.** It won't improve without proper treatment and the longer an ear problem is neglected, the longer it can take to treat.
9. **If you suspect your hearing is not what it used to be consult your doctor as soon as possible.** The sooner a hearing loss is diagnosed and appropriate treatment given, the less impact it will have on your life.
10. **Don't be afraid to discuss any concerns you might have about your ears with a health professional.** Talking it through with a doctor or nurse can dispel unnecessary fears, provide a clearer understanding and if necessary, ensure you get appropriate treatment.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

If any of your questions concerning ear health have not been answered by reading this, contact the Deafness Research UK Information Service for further assistance. Our Information team will either answer your enquiry directly or refer it to one of our scientific or medical advisers.

Open: 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m., Monday to Friday (a message can be left at other times).

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Deafness Research UK is the only national medical research charity dedicated to helping people with deafness, tinnitus or other hearing problems.

Scientists are now predicting that within the next ten to fifteen years there could be a cure for some forms of deafness and much more effective treatments for tinnitus. Deafness Research UK is at the forefront of this work.

You can support us by making a donation or joining the Deafness Research UK League of Friends. For more information call us on 0207 833 1733 or write to:

Deafness Research UK, 330-332 Gray's Inn Rd, London WC1X8EE  
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