How to Irrigate Ears

Chapter contents

A) Technique for irrigating ears

One of the most effective ways of removing excessive wax from the ears is irrigation with warm water. Irrigation may also come in handy for removing certain types of foreign bodies from the ears. Seeds and plant materials that tend to swell when moist may be irrigated with oil rather than liquids containing water. Because of sensitive nerves in the ear, fluids that are too warm or too cool will cause dizziness, loss of balance, nausea, etc. Therefore, always use fluids at or near body temperature to irrigate ears.

A) Technique for irrigating ears

Various kinds of syringes are available for irrigating ears. Some are equipped with splashguards so as to contain the fluid to the general area. The simplest and least expensive instrument is a plastic or rubber bulb syringe available in most pharmacies—sometimes used for aspirating secretions from the nose of babies. Water picks are used by some, but are probably no more effective than the bulb.

One may irrigate the ears while bending over the sink or a basin, or one may do it while in a shower or bathtub.

Fill the bulb (syringe) with water (oil for bugs, etc.) at body temperature, direct the nozzle into the ear (be sure to leave room for the water and foreign material to wash out!) and squeeze the
bulb quite forcefully. Repeat the process over and over again until the wax or foreign matter is dislodged. This is usually evident either by seeing the matter removed, or by a sudden improvement in hearing. When complete, tip the head to drain excess fluid from the canal.

**Note:** Sometimes it is necessary to use oil, hydrogen peroxide, ear wax softeners, etc., for a couple days before irrigating the wax out of the canal.

**Caution:** Do not irrigate ears with a suspected or known perforation of the eardrum.