

How should you clean your ears?

One of the simplest methods is via a gentle irrigation. You can create a 1:1 mix of white vinegar (which is also known as acetic acid) and isopropyl (rubbing) alcohol and keep it in a clean container or dropper bottle. Apply this into the ear with a dropper—do not use an object such as a cotton swab—and fill the canal with this solution. If you don't have a dropper, use a cotton ball saturated in the solution and use it as a make-shift dropper by squeezing it into the ear. Massage the solution into the ear by compressing the tragus—the flap of skin and cartilage that lies in front of the entrance into the ear canal. This allows the solution to mix around to clean the ear. Alternatively, you can use a small syringe to gently irrigate the ear.

Caution: make sure the solution is close to body temperature. Otherwise if too cold, you could experience a caloric effect which can cause vertigo or dizziness which can be a highly unpleasant experience.

People have irrigated their ears with warm water or rinsed the ear under the shower. This is an acceptable method, but avoid drying the ear with a cotton swab. If you feel water trapped in the ear, use the solution above just isopropyl alcohol by itself. Alcohol evaporates at a lower temperature than water, and since it easily mixes with water it helps to remove water and effectively dry the ear. It is paramount to remove any excess water, for this too can cause [*otitis externa*](#) or “swimmer’s ear.”

Another method is the use of hydrogen peroxide. This is helpful for firm or very dry ear wax. If you are to use this method, fill the ear canal with the peroxide and allow it to effervesce for about 15 minutes. The by-product of hydrogen peroxide is water, and thus you need to remove the water by the methods just explained above.

For dry, itchy ears: You may place a drop or two of baby oil in the ears once a day as needed for ear itching with a dropper bottle or use a cotton ball as a make-shift dropper—soak it with the oil and squeeze a drop or two into the ear. This helps relubricate the ear canals in patients with dry ears.

DO NOT USE Q-tips or other instruments into your ears.

Also you can check out [Ear Cleaning: Do's and Don'ts](#) on our website for more information, and to https://www.randalfong.com/patient_information_education for a broad array of other ENT topics.