

Caring For Your Athlete's Ears

Did you know? Earwax buildup is a common reason athletes visit Healthy Hearing for a screening. Safe ear cleaning can help prevent temporary hearing loss, discomfort, and confusion on the field.

THE MYTH	✓THE FACT
Cotton swabs (Q-tips) are the best way to clean out earwax deep inside.	Cotton swabs push wax deeper. This packs it tight against the eardrum, causing pain and temporary hearing loss.
Ears must be scrubbed internally to stay clean and hygienic.	Ears are self-cleaning. Skin inside grows outward like a conveyor belt, carrying old earwax out naturally.
Earwax is dirty and always a sign of poor personal hygiene.	Earwax protects the ears. It forms a natural barrier that traps dirt, dust, sweat, and prevents infections.
Hearing devices have no impact on natural earwax buildup.	Devices trap wax. Hearing aids, earplugs, and sport molds physically block wax, requiring more frequent checks.

WHAT TO DO	WHAT TO AVOID
Clean the outside only: Wash the outer ear with a soft, warm, damp washcloth during regular showers	Never insert objects: Keep cotton swabs, fingers, keys, and hairpins out of the ear canal entirely
Dry ears thoroughly: Use a soft towel to gently dry ears after swimming or bathing to prevent moisture	Skip ear candling: Avoid ear candles completely due to severe risks of burns and eardrum damage
Ask a doctor first: Talk to an audiologist before using over-the-counter drops if your athlete has ear history	Do not ignore changes: Watch for behavioral changes like turning up the TV or missing sports cues

Contact a healthcare professional or Audiologist immediately if you notice:

Physical pain: Ear pain, constant itching, or a plugged feeling	Unusual drainage: Liquid or unpleasant odors coming from the ear canal
Hearing changes: Sudden drops in hearing or increased communication struggles	Device whistling: Frequent feedback from a hearing aid, which often indicates a earwax blockage
Dizziness: balance issues combined with hearing changes or weakness	Tinnitus: Ongoing ringing, buzzing hissing, or humming in your ears