



1. Overview

- a. Cerumen can build up in an ear canal leading to pain and hearing problems.
- b. Some reasons for removing the cerumen are to visualize the tympanic membrane, to remove wax buildup, to ease discomfort, and to reduce the problem of hearing changes resulting from cerumen impaction. On occasion irrigation of the ear canal is done to remove a foreign body.

2. Goal of the procedure

- a. Safe removal of impacted cerumen without complications

3. References

- a. [Colyar, M. R. \(2015\). Cerumen impaction removal. In M. R. Colyar, Advanced practice nursing procedures \(pp. 363-366\). Philadelphia, PA: F. A. Davis.](#)
- b. [Schwartz, S. R., Magit, A. E., Rosenfeld, R. M., Ballachanda, B. B., Hackell, J. M., Krouse, H. J., Cunningham, E. R. \(2017\). Clinical practice guideline \(Update\): Earwax \(Cerumen impaction\). Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery, 156\(IS\) S1-S29. DOI: 10.1177/0194599816671491](#)

4. Required Reading / Review

- Lippincott Nursing Procedures – 7th Ed. (2016). Click on the link below, enter the words **Ear Irrigation** into the **Search:** field, then **Go**; then click on the first listing for the Full Text that describes and illustrates the procedure. <http://resources.ahsl.arizona.edu/information/databases/gateway.cfm?instanceID=296737>

5. Required Procedure Competencies

- Gather needed equipment: Kidney basin, large syringe with short piece of winged infusion set tubing, solution of hydrogen peroxide/tepid water
- After having patient change into a gown or after providing drapes to protect clothing, position patient in sitting position, and have them tilt the head slightly downward; children can be positioned supine on the table
- Put on gloves
- Hold the basin snugly beneath the ear
- Hold the pinna and straighten the canal
 - For persons 6 and over: down and back
 - For children under 6: up and back
- Using the large syringe filled with the peroxide/water solution, direct the stream of water aiming at the ear canal, not the tympanic membrane
- After the cerumen is dislodged inspect the ear canal with an otoscope, and gently dry the canal with a cotton-tipped applicator