



Why is my ear blocked? - FAQ

So, why is my ear blocked?

You have clogged or muffled sensations in the ear due to a block in the ear canal, like wax, a foreign body, or sometimes jaw problems. Another major cause of ear block sensation is fluid collection inside the ear impairing the hearing mechanism

Wax or foreign body has to be removed under medical endoscopic supervision. Avoid probing your ear with earbuds. This could injure the eardrum directly or push the wax deeper into the canal.

Hearing impairment as a part of aging or due to nerve damage can also manifest as an ear block.

How does fluid collect inside the ear?

The main reasons for fluid accumulation are an active ear infection, a sudden change in pressure, or a dysfunctional eustachian tube.

1. Otitis Media

A clogged ear, also known as **Otitis Media**, is an ear infection that occurs when fluid builds up in the middle ear and a virus or bacteria starts to multiply in the fluid. It could be a part of the common cold or cause nasal allergies too. In infants and toddlers, faulty breastfeeding techniques can also cause this.

Note: This is not a serious condition, but it is still difficult and uncomfortable to live with, and this can undoubtedly make everyday life feel hard. You may also end up with a **Swimmer's Ear** which is a condition that results from water being trapped in the ear. **Also, it is good to be sure that you aren't missing something more serious than just a little fluid or wax in the ear.**

2. Otitic barotrauma.

Ear Block after a flight journey is called **Otitic barotrauma**. You may end up with a cold when you fly or dive, which prevents adequate equalization of pressure in the middle ear. Sometimes your middle ear and the back of your nose

get blocked. You may experience a feeling of fullness or pressure in your ears. **This causes ear pain, dizziness, and muffled hearing.** There are times when the swelling from the cold subsides, and the blockage usually resolves itself.

3. Eustachian Tube Dysfunction (ETD)

The Eustachian tube is a small canal that runs from either ear (from the middle ear) to the back of the nose and upper throat. For the most part, the Eustachian Tubes remain closed, but they will open as a person chews, yawns, or swallows and equalize the pressure inside the ear. Another function of the eustachian tubes is to drain built-up mucus into your nose or throat.

Please note: Eustachian tube dysfunction (ETD) can trigger physical blockage, swelling-induced blockage, and a ruptured eardrum.



Remedies to unblock your clogged ears:

☐ In case your ears are plugged, try swallowing, yawning, or chewing sugar-free gum to open your Eustachian tubes.

☐ Take a deep breath and try to blow out of your nose gently while pinching your nostrils closed and keeping your mouth shut. If you hear a popping noise, you know you have succeeded.

☐ Quit smoking today, as smoking causes ciliary movement dysfunction leading to mucous non clearance

☐ A warm compress can help reduce the pain caused by clogged ears.

☐ Gargling with water (with/without salt) may help prevent upper respiratory infections. It can also help ease the symptoms of nasal congestion and clogged ears associated with a cold or flu.

☐ Cooking vinegar contains acetic acid, which can heal chronic ear infections.

Other ways to clear plugged ears:

☐ Nasal decongestants which should be used only for a few days

□ Topical nasal steroids, especially in people with allergies (as recommended by your ENT doctor)

□ Ventilation tubes, in severe cases, drain fluid and relieve pressure

Important tip:

If the blockage does not clear, this could mean that there is dysfunction in the eustachian tube, which could cause further complications and lead to infection if not treated. **If your symptoms are severe or last more than two weeks, visit your ENT doctor immediately.**

Adjust your lifestyle habits and remember to follow your doctor's instructions to lead a healthy life.

- Dr. Prashanth R Reddy

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