

## Using cotton buds could damage your hearing

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Photo - public domain  
(via kropekk.pl on pixabay.com)

Doctors are now telling us what grandparents have known for decades - don't stick anything smaller than your elbow into your ears. An organization of ear specialists in the USA, the American

Academy of Otolaryngology, has said cleaning your ears with cotton buds (aka Q-tips) can cause long-lasting damage to your eardrums and hearing. Dr Jennifer Caudle told Yahoo Beauty that cotton buds seem harmless objects but can cause significant damage. She said: "I know people want to stick things in their ears and they think it's the right thing to do, but [cotton buds] can cause holes in the eardrum, irritation in the canal, and can predispose you to getting infections."

The Academy has also recommended that people change their image of earwax and think of it as an essential substance to keep our ears healthy. Dr Seth Schwartz said: "There is an inclination for people to want to clean their ears because they believe earwax is an indication of uncleanliness. This misinformation leads to unsafe ear health habits." Doctors say our body produces earwax for a good reason. It does an essential job of cleaning out the ears, stopping them from drying out, and helping them to sweat naturally. It also protects the inner ears against bacteria, bugs, dirt and dust. Using cotton buds can push earwax further inside the ear and cause blockages, which can undo all the good work of earwax.

Sources: [Yahoo.com](http://Yahoo.com) / [gizmodo.com](http://gizmodo.com) / [sciencealert.com](http://sciencealert.com)

## Writing

Hearing is the most important of the five senses. Discuss.

## Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

doctors / grandparents / elbows / ears / harmless / objects / damage / infections / image / earwax / healthy / misinformation / essential / sweat / bacteria / blockages

## True / False

- Grandparents knew not to stick things smaller than elbows in our ears. T / F
- Cotton buds are also known as Q-tips. T / F
- A doctor said cotton buds look harmless but can cause a lot of damage. T / F
- A doctor said cotton buds could cause holes in the ear canals. T / F
- An organization said we should change our image of earwax. T / F
- People tend to believe earwax is a sign of cleanliness. T / F
- Earwax causes our ears to dry out. T / F
- Cotton buds remove earwax and this avoids blockages in the ear. T / F

## Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- |                       |               |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| 1. <b>specialists</b> | a. appear     |
| 2. <b>seem</b>        | b. proper     |
| 3. <b>significant</b> | c. normally   |
| 4. <b>right</b>       | d. experts    |
| 5. <b>infections</b>  | e. perception |
| 6. <b>image</b>       | f. serious    |
| 7. <b>essential</b>   | g. sign       |
| 8. <b>indication</b>  | h. ruin       |
| 9. <b>naturally</b>   | i. diseases   |
| 10. <b>undo</b>       | j. vital      |

## Discussion – Student A

- What should we do to look after our ears?
- What do you think of earwax?
- Why do people think earwax is a sign of uncleanliness?
- What other misinformation do companies of health products give?
- Will you now change your ear-cleaning habits?
- What should people do for an earache?
- How important is our sense of hearing?
- What questions would you like to ask the doctors?

## Phrase Match

- |   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. telling us what grandparents have    | a. lasting damage           |
| 2. anything smaller than                | b. against bacteria         |
| 3. Q-tips can cause long-               | c. infections               |
| 4. cotton buds can cause holes          | d. of uncleanliness         |
| 5. predispose you to getting            | e. substance                |
| 6. think of it as an essential          | f. in the eardrum           |
| 7. they believe earwax is an indication | g. known for decades        |
| 8. It does an essential job             | h. good work of earwax      |
| 9. It also protects the inner ears      | i. of cleaning out the ears |
| 10. undo all the                        | j. your elbow               |

## Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- Why do grandparents know more than doctors?
- How dangerous is putting cotton buds in the ear?
- What things do you do that could damage your ears?
- What do you know about how our ears work?
- What other uses are there of cotton buds?
- Have you ever hurt or damaged your ears?
- Will cotton bud companies believe the doctors?

## Spelling

- what grandparents have known for edcsade
- An organization of ear sliscsipaet
- cause sniifactgn damage
- cause holes in the druerma
- ariotrnti in the canal
- predispose you to getting enioiftnsc
- mcdemdoreen that people change
- think of it as an esntilsea substance
- earwax is an dtnniaoci of uncleanliness
- helping them to sweat anrtlulay
- protects the inner ears against earaicbt
- cause bsekolagc

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. d	2. a	3. f	4. b	5. i
6. e	7. j	8. g	9. c	10. h

## Role Play

### Role A – Cotton buds

You think cotton buds are the biggest danger to our ears. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't dangerous. Also, tell the others which is the least dangerous of these (and why): headphones, insects or ear piercings.

### Role B – Headphones

You think headphones are the biggest danger to our ears. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't dangerous. Also, tell the others which is the least dangerous of these (and why): cotton buds, insects or ear piercings.

### Role C – Insects

You think insects are the biggest danger to our ears. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't dangerous. Also, tell the others which is the least dangerous of these (and why): headphones, cotton buds or ear piercings.

### Role D – Ear Piercings

You think ear piercings are the biggest danger to our ears. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't dangerous. Also, tell the others which is the least dangerous of these (and why): headphones, insects or cotton buds.

## Speaking – Ear dangers

Rank these with your partner. Put the biggest dangers to ears at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- |                 |               |
|-----------------|---------------|
| • rock concerts | • cotton buds |
| • city noise    | • headphones  |
| • swimming      | • insects     |
| • ear piercings | • bacteria    |

### Answers – True False

a	T	b	T	c	T	d	F	e	T	f	F	g	F	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.