

Best ear protection when swimming? ^[1]

Dear Alice,

What would be the best way to protect my ears when swimming? Are earplugs a good solution?

Answer

Dear Reader,

You heard correctly! Earplugs are a great way to protect your ears when you swim. Excessive and relatively constant moisture in the ear canal can cause infection in the external part of the canal. Infections of this sort are commonly known as "swimmer's ear." Symptoms of swimmer's ear include:

- Pain in the inner ear
- A sense of fullness or blockage of the ear
- Discharge from the ear
- Itching inside the ear

If you decide to wear earplugs, take a few simple precautions to prevent getting an infection from the earplugs themselves. Change them every two weeks or so. Also, clean your earplugs after wearing them with a little rubbing alcohol and a cotton ball. You can also prevent swimmer's ear by keeping your ears dry after you go for a dip. You can gently dab your inner ears with a towel or cotton-tipped swab to prevent against infection. Don't forget to be gentle with those cotton swabs — pushing and/or jabbing anything too deeply into your ears can cause damage to your ear drum, not to mention blockage due to the redistribution of wax.

If you have an ear infection, it is best to keep your ears away from water until the infection has cleared up. If your symptoms last longer than a week or two (depending on their severity), or if you get swimmer's ear often, it's critical that you see your health care provider. In addition, make an appointment with them right away if your infection is accompanied by a fever, pus-like or bloody discharge, or any noticeable hearing loss or ringing in your ears. Keeping your ears happy and healthy can help you swim your best!

Alice!

Category:

[General Health](#) [2]

[Miscellaneous](#) [3]

Related questions

[Why, exactly, shouldn't I stick cotton swabs in my ears?](#) [4]

[Chlorine effects on hair](#) [5]

[Ear plugs](#) [6]

[Swimming when menstruating — without tampons?](#) [7]

Resources

[Medical Services \(Morningside\)](#) [8]

[Medical Services \(CUIMC\)](#) [9]

Published date:

Oct 23, 1998

Last reviewed on:

Jul 24, 2014

Footer menu

- ▼ [Contact Alice!](#)
 - [Content Use](#)
 - [Media Inquiries](#)
 - [Comments & Corrections](#)
- ▼ [Syndication & Licensing](#)
 - [Licensing Q&As](#)
 - [Get Alice! on Your Website](#)
 - [Full Site Syndication](#)
 - [Link to Go Ask Alice!](#)

Go Ask Alice! is not an emergency or instant response service.

If you are in an urgent situation, please [visit our Emergency page](#) to view a list of 24 hour support services and hotlines.

Source URL: <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/best-ear-protection-when-swimming>

Links

[1] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/best-ear-protection-when-swimming>

[2] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/general-health>

[3] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/miscellaneous-1>

[4] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/why-exactly-shouldnt-i-stick-cotton-swabs-my-ears>

[5] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/chlorine-effects-hair>

[6] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/ear-plugs>

[7] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/swimming-when-menstruating-%E2%80%94-without-tampons-0>

[8] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/medical-services-morningside>

[9] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/medical-services-cuimc>