

How to Clean Your Cats' Ears

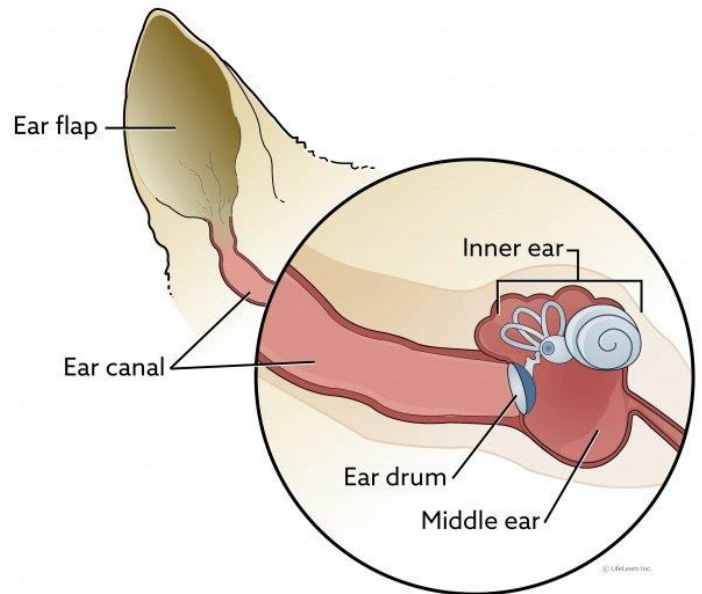
Ear cleaning is not usually necessary in cats. Most cats are fine without it, but for those who are prone to wax build-up and/or ear infections, ear cleaning is a very important part of your cat's hygiene needs.

Why is it important?

The structure of the cat's ear canal makes it very difficult for material trapped deep within the horizontal canal to be expelled without the assistance of cleanings. This material can lead to itchiness and ear infections if not removed.

Do I need to use an ear cleaner?

It is highly recommended to use a good quality ear cleaner. Cleaners with hydrogen peroxide or alcohol can cause irritation within the ear canal, especially if the canal is inflamed or ulcerated. Some ear cleaners have antibacterial or antifungal ingredients to help prevent ear infections. Certain cleaners are better at removing wax build-up. Your veterinarian can help you decide which ear cleaning solution is best for your pet.



What do I need to clean my cat's ears?

Cleaning your cat's ears does not require any special equipment. A good quality ear cleaning solution, some cotton balls or gauze, and some treats to reward your cat are all that is needed.

DO NOT use cotton tip applicators (Q-tips) due to the risk of perforating the ear drum or causing trauma to the ear canal. In addition, the use of cotton tip applicators can push debris further into the canal.

Do all cats need to have their ears cleaned?

No. While it is important to clean your cat's ears when needed, over-cleaning may cause irritation in the ear canal and this can lead to infection. Most cats have healthy, clean ears and never need to have their ears cleaned.

However, it is recommended to clean your cat's ears if you notice discharge or an odor when examining the ear. Your veterinarian can help you decide how often your cat's ears should be cleaned.

If your cat's ears are red, inflamed, and painful, consult with your veterinarian prior to cleaning. Your cat may have an ear infection or a ruptured ear drum.

Step-by-Step Guide for Ear Cleaning

1. Sitting in a comfortable position, hold your cat in your lap. Wrapping or swaddling your cat in a towel may help keep them calm if they are resistant to having their ears cleaned.
2. Grasp the tip of the ear flap (pinna) pulling back slightly to expose the ear canal and to help straighten the ear canal out.

3. While holding your cat's ear flap, gently but firmly with one hand, hold the ear cleaning solution in your other hand.

4. Squeeze some ear cleaning solution into your cat's ear. Use enough cleaner to completely fill the ear canal. It is fine if some of the cleaner spills out of the canal. If the tip of the bottle touches your cat's ear, wipe the tip of the bottle off with a clean cotton ball soaked in alcohol to prevent the spread of bacteria or yeast between each ear cleaning.



5. Continue to hold the ear flap with one hand and gently massage the base of the ear below the ear opening for about 30 seconds with the other hand. This allows the cleaning solution to break up the debris that is in the ear canal. You should hear a 'squishing' sound as the cleaning solution moves around in the horizontal part of the canal.

6. While still holding the ear flap, wipe away debris from the inner part of the ear flap and the upper ear canal using a cotton ball or gauze.

7. Allow your cat to shake her head. This allows the remaining ear cleaning solution and debris from the ear canal to move out of the canal to the outer opening of the ear.



8. Once again, hold the ear flap, and remove the loosened debris and cleaning solution from the outer opening of the ear canal using a cotton ball or gauze.

9. Remove any debris and remaining cleaning solution from the ear canal with a cotton ball or gauze – only go into the canal as far as your finger will reach.

10. **NEVER** use a cotton-tipped applicator (Q-tip) to remove the solution from the ear canal. Doing so can damage the ear canal and/or ear drum or push debris further into the canal.

11. Provide treats to your cat.

12. Repeat the same process with the other ear.

13. If your cat appears to be in pain during the cleaning process, stop and consult your veterinarian.

14. Repeat the cleaning procedure as often as is recommended by your veterinarian.

If your cat has an ear infection and requires medication to be applied to the ears, clean the ears first and then apply the medication.

Step-by-Step Guide for Medication Application

1. Medication can be applied immediately after cleaning your cat's ears. Your veterinarian will provide further information about how often the medication is to be applied and how many drops are needed.
2. Grasp the tip of the ear flap pulling back slightly to expose the ear canal and help straighten the ear canal out.
3. Administer the number of drops of medication that your veterinarian has prescribed.
4. **DO NOT** put the tip of the bottle into the ear. If the tip of the bottle touches your cat's ear, wipe the tip off with a clean cotton ball soaked in alcohol to prevent the spread of bacteria or yeast.
5. Continue to hold the ear flap, and gently massage the base of the ear below the ear opening for about 30 seconds. This allows the medication to coat the entire ear canal. You should again hear a 'squishing' sound in the ear as the medication coats the horizontal part of the canal.
6. If the inner part of the ear flap is involved with the infection, place the prescribed amount of medication on the infected part of the ear flap. Spread the medication around with your finger (preferably covered with a glove).
7. Repeat this process with the other ear, as needed.
8. If debris or medication accumulates on the flap part of the ear, it can be wiped away with a cotton ball soaked in ear cleaning solution.

