

## Cleaning Your Dog's Ears

Your dog's ear is more L-shaped than yours, and debris loves to collect at the corner of the L. To remove this debris, fill your dog's ear canal with a good ear cleaner. Ear cleaners should be slightly acidic but should NOT sting. Massage the base of the ear for 20-30 seconds to soften and release the debris. Wipe out the loose debris and excess fluid with a cotton ball. Repeat this procedure until you see no more debris. Depending on your dog's ear condition, you may have to start out doing this twice a day.

Cotton applicator swabs can be used to clean the inside of the earflap and the part of the ear canal you can see. They should NOT be used farther down in the ear canal since that tends to pack debris in the ear canal, rather than removing it.

Some ear problems are so painful, the dog must be anesthetized to do a good job of cleaning the ears. You may find your dog does not like to have his ears cleaned because it is uncomfortable. Talking to him during the process, stopping momentarily to give him a treat if he is doing well (we do not want to reward fussiness!) and doing something fun afterwards may all help.

After the ear is clean, let the dog shake his head and allow some time for the ears to dry. Then you can apply any ear medication that was prescribed.

### Preventing ear disease

The key to healthy ears is to keep them clean. Check your dog's ears weekly. A slight amount of waxy buildup may be present in normal ears. If your dog swims a lot, has pendulous ears, or a history of ear disease, routine cleaning (often once to three times per week) is recommended. Use the same procedure as described above. Excess hair around the ear can be clipped to allow more air flow. Treat any underlying condition that predisposes your dog to ear problems.

Remember, if your dog is showing severe discomfort, the ears have a bad smell, or the ear canals look very abnormal, do not delay in contacting your veterinarian. If your dog has a ruptured or weakened eardrum, some ear cleansers and medications could do more harm than good.