

Don't want surfer's ear? Keep it dry



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SURF'S UP

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One of the occasional health issues that we who surf here in Southern California have to deal with is a little condition commonly referred to as "surfer's ear."

I could be the poster boy for this condition. It is something that just keeps coming back over and over.

Surfer's ear comes from the wind and the cold water. These little bumps, which are actually bone growths, form inside your ear canal just outside of your ear drum. They are like little speed bumps inside your ear that your body grows to protect itself from the aforementioned wind and cold water. For the most part they don't affect you much until they start getting big and threaten to close off your ear canal totally. You don't want that to happen.

The answer to this problem is surgery. They have an operation where they cut the back of your ear itself and peel it forward and stick it on the side of your cheek. Then they go in with something like a dentist's drill and actually drill out the bone growths. Kind of like sanding them off.

Then they pack your ear for a couple of weeks so that the skin doesn't adhere to itself and form a little drum cover over your ear drum while it is healing. Then they take it out, and you let it heal for a few more weeks, and then you go back out surfing and let them start growing all over again.

Each time they grow back they grow back faster. I have had my left ear drilled out five times and my right ear once. I have no idea why my left is worse than my right, it just is.

One time I had a bad doctor, thanks to my insurance telling me that was who I had to go to, and he screwed the packing up, and my skin grew a membrane across the canal. I kept going back, and he kept poking holes in it, and it kept growing back together.

Finally, I went to a really good doctor and had another surgery to remove the stupid membrane.

Take my advice, folks. If this happens to you, get an expert doctor. The best I know of is Carol Jackson in Newport Beach. She is right across the street from Hoag Hospital and has an office full of hot babes working for her. I call 'em the "ear babes."

How do you keep from getting surfer's ear? Good question. A lot of people use ear plugs, and for some they work. They never did for me, though. All they seem to do for me is keep the water in my ear and make it so I can't hear a thing. I hate that. I like to hear the birds singing and the red-eyed body-pierced tattooed young meanies screeching at me after they drop in on me over and over and are mad because I still make the wave.

But many would argue that plugs are the way to go. A surfing doctor from Santa Cruz, which is not Surf City, has a product out called Doc's Pro Plugs. They seem to be the best.

But a new product has just hit the market that may be even better. It is an ear dryer. Yeah, just like a hair dryer except for the ears. It's totally cool. It is called the Sahara DryEar and is marketed by a company called Sahara Design and Marketing Group.

The DryEar is a little device that fits inside your ear. You put it in for a little over a minute after you come out of the water, and it totally warms and dries out the inside of your ear canal. Not only does this help in preventing surfer's ear, but it will also greatly reduce the chances of ear infections. It is a safe and easy way to deal with your ears and is small and easy to carry around with you. The retail cost is under a hundred dollars and, in my opinion, well worth it.

Of course, the best way to not get surfer's ear is to either not surf – yeaaaaa, more waves for me – or only surf in warm, tropical conditions. Surfers from Northern California get them more than Southern Californians, and we get them way more than surfers from Hawaii. They just about never get them. So, take care of your ears, and you won't get drilled.