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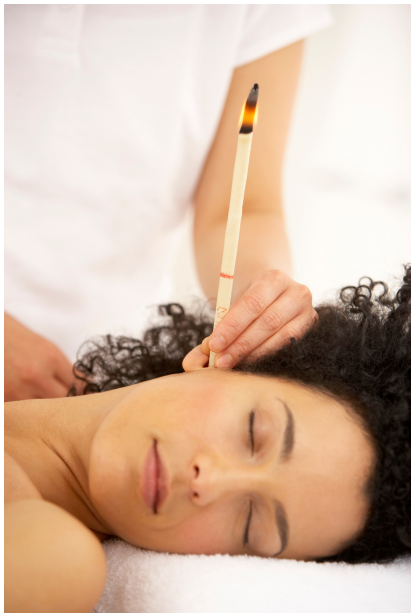

Ear Candling
Does it Work?

Ear Candling services are commonly offered in Singapore together with Spa and Wellness packages.
Let's explore if it really works.

Dr Liu Jiaying

WHAT IS EAR CANDLING?

Ear Candling involves placing a hollow candle made from a fabric tube soaked in beeswax in the external ear canal. The candle is lit and burned for around 15 minutes.

After that, a brown waxy substance, believed to be a mixture of ear wax, debris, and bacteria, is left in the candle stub with amount of wax differing for various ages and gender.

WHAT IS THE MEDICAL EVIDENCE?

Theory 1:
The “Chimney Effect” theory proposes that negative pressure created during candling draws out the ear wax. However, an experiment on an artificial ear discovered there was NO negative pressure during candling and the residue it created was tested and found to contain candle wax residue not ear wax.

Theory 2:
It is assumed that the heat from the burning candle will melt ear wax and it will flow out of ears. However, scientists in Canada found the temperature 1 cm from the base of the burning candle to only be 22 ◦ C, well below core body temperature so unable to melt wax.

EAR CANDLING INJURIES

- Burns to ear and face
- Ear canal blockage
- Temporary hearing loss
- Ear infection
- Perforated Ear Drum

The U.S. FDA has warned consumers against using ear candling, noting the risks are high and there is no valid scientific evidence for any medical benefit from its use.

HOW SHOULD WE CLEAN OUR EARS SAFELY?

Firstly, don't dig your ears or put anything in your ear canal. Ears are self-cleaning and wax will migrate spontaneously from inside out.

If you have a build-up of ear wax, the safest and fastest way to clean them to let an ENT specialist clean it for you using a microscope.