



Ear Care Advice

Ear wax forms a protective antibacterial coating to the skin in the ear canal; it is normal and essential to have a degree of wax to collect debris and dust which helps to protect the ear drum. It is usually self cleaning. Plugs of wax may develop in some people causing symptoms of reduced hearing, discomfort or itch.

It is important you do not try to clean your ears with cotton buds or such like as this pushes wax deeper and is not required.

Preparation of ear for irrigation

Olive oil alone will often clear plugs of wax.

Warm the olive oil to room temperature and instill a generous amount. Lie with the effected ear uppermost for a minimum of 10 minutes to allow the wax to absorb the oil. Repeat the process on the opposite side if both ears are blocked. Continue for a minimum of 7 days. Sodium bicarbonate 5% may be applied only after oiling to dislodge the wax; this will not soften so should not be used independently. These drops are available from the chemist or on prescription. They will be cheaper from the chemist if you pay prescription charges.

Otex or Cerumol are not recommended

Ear Irrigation

Maybe needed for a minority of patients; for these, an appointment in the ear irrigation clinic can be arranged. Waiting time is approximately one month as current demand is high and it is essential to prioritise care. Although plugs of wax can be a nuisance it is not a serious problem. Patients assessed to have a more urgent clinical need will be seen sooner.

Rarely ear syringing can cause serious damage to the ear or ear drum including perforation so should not be undertaken unless absolutely necessary.

Application of ear drops and ear irrigation may not be advisable if:

- You have or have had a perforated ear drum
- You have had any form of surgery to the ear
- You think you may have an ear infection or have had an ear infection in the past 6 months
- You have any ear pain
- Grommets' should have been out for >18months
- Any form of cleft pallet; repaired or not

Following irrigation it is not advisable to swim or immerse your head in water as you will have lost the antibacterial protection of your ear wax