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Ear wax patient information

Ear syringing is not a core service of General Practice and has not been resourced by our local CCG.

Unfortunately in order to ensure we can provide the full range of nursing needs to all of our patients we have had to stop providing ear syringing as a practice. We have also had many problems getting hold of the equipment to undertake ear syringing due to a national shortage.

Ear wax should only be removed if causing the following symptoms:

- Hearing loss
- Earache
- Tinnitus
- Vertigo
- Prior to hearing aid fitting

You should not use earbuds or ear candling as these can do more harm than good. If you have had an ear perforation previously you should see the GP unless previously advised on how to manage your ear wax problem.

You can self-care for your ear wax by following instructions on the following pages.

You can also get your ear wax removed privately at local hearing centres (Hear4U in Hinckley is one).

You can be referred to a local specialist GP or NHS hospital for micro-suction of your ear wax if it continues to cause symptoms. There is a waiting list for these services and you will have been expected to try the methods overleaf first.



Blocked ears (wax) self-care guidelines for patients

Earwax:

Earwax is a normal build-up of dead cells, hair, foreign material such as dust, and natural wax which forms a protective coating on the skin in the ear canal. The quantity of earwax produced varies greatly from person to person.

A doctor or nurse can look into the ear canal and confirm a plug of earwax has formed. A plug of earwax is not a serious problem, more a nuisance. You only need to remove earwax if it is causing symptoms such as dulled hearing or when fitting a hearing aid.

How to remove Ear wax:

Note: If you think you have ear wax, do not try to clean the ear canal with cotton wool buds. This can make things worse, as you will push some earwax deeper inside. It may also cause an ear infection.

Ear drops:

Ear drops alone will clear a plug of earwax in most cases. Put 2 or 3 drops of ordinary olive oil down the ear 2 or 3 times a day for 2-3 weeks. This softens the wax so that it then runs out of its own accord without harming the ear. You can continue for any length of time, but 3 weeks is usually enough. Surprisingly, you will not necessarily see wax come out. It often seems to come out unnoticed.

If you are prone to repeated wax built up you can continue to use olive oil drops twice a week to prevent recurrence.

If olive oil does not work you can buy sodium bicarbonate drops from pharmacies.

How to use ear drops:

1. Warm the drops to room temperature before using them
2. Pour a few drops into the affected ear
3. Lie with the affected ear uppermost when putting in drops
4. Stay like this for 10 minutes to allow the drops to soak into the earwax.

Bulb Syringing:

Instructions for Bulb Syringing:

Use olive oil drops twice a day for at least 14 days prior to bulb syringing. Or alternatively use sodium bicarbonate ear drops purchased from your pharmacy (please read the manufacturers leaflet.)

1. Wash your hands.
2. Use a bowl of cooled, boiled water that is warm to the touch, not too hot or too cold
3. Prepare the syringe by squirting water in and out of it a few times.
4. Gently pull your outer ear "up and out" to help straighten out the canal, which will allow better access for the water
5. Tilt your head so the ear to be treated is upmost.
6. Place the tip of the syringe into the opening of the ear.- Do NOT push the syringe further into the ear and gently squirt one or more bulb syringes of water into your ear. (This might be best done in the shower so that the excess water will run into the bathtub and not on your floor)
7. Allow the water to remain in your ear for at least 60 seconds. Gently tilt your head in the opposite direction and wiggle your outer ear

If, after 3 weeks or more, you are still deaf from wax, you will need to make an appointment with a doctor or nurse to decide what should be done.