

## **Ear Syringing**

This is only usually considered if the above recommendations have proved to be unsuccessful. Ear wax needs to be softened as above for 7-14 days before attempting to syringe. Although the risks are low and nurses are specially trained to perform this procedure, there is still a small chance (thought to be around 1 in 1000) of complications occurring, such as a perforated ear.

## **Ongoing self-care**

If your ears are regularly becoming blocked with wax, after clearing the blockage, it is suggested that you use olive oil drops as above around once a week to keep the wax soft and encourage the natural process of wax expulsion.

*Based on information and  
recommendations from the Rotherham  
Primary Ear Care Centre and Twyford  
Practice leaflet (Jan 2017)*

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# **Ear Wax**

## **An LMC Guide**



### **Representing:**

- Dorset LMC
- Hampshire & Isle of Wight LMC
- Wiltshire LMC

### **Supporting:**

- Jersey, Guernsey & Alderney GPs



## Ear Wax

- ◆ Ear wax is normal it provides protection for your ears
- ◆ Your ears are self-cleaning
- ◆ The movement of your jaw while eating and talking moves the wax along the canal
- ◆ Ear wax only becomes a problem if it causes deafness, pain or if a health professional needs a clear view of the ear drum

## What makes ear wax worse?

- ◆ The amount of wax produced varies from person to person
- ◆ Some people produce excessive amounts of wax and this can block the ear canal
- ◆ Wearing a hearing aid, ear plugs and/or head phones can interfere with wax expulsion
- ◆ Narrow and/or hairy ear canals
- ◆ If you are elderly – the wax produced may be harder and drier
- ◆ Dry skin in people who suffer with eczema or psoriasis

## What you shouldn't do

- ◆ Use cotton buds to clean the ear. This forces the wax deeper into the canal and can cause damage, trauma and possible infection
- ◆ Do not use objects such as matches, hair grips, crochet hooks, knitting needles, keys etc. this can cause trauma and possible infection
- ◆ If your ears are itchy do not scratch or rub them with your finger nails or any other objects
- ◆ Do not use anything smaller than your elbow in your ear!!

## What helps?

- ◆ Try and keep your ears dry. When washing your hair, showering or swimming putting some Vaseline around the inner part of your ear can help
- ◆ Don't put your head under the water when bathing
- ◆ If you regularly get blocked ears, use olive oil drops weekly

## When to see the GP or Advanced Nurse Practitioner

If you are experiencing the following symptoms:

- ◆ Pain
- ◆ Discharge or bleeding from the ear
- ◆ Sudden deafness
- ◆ Dizziness
- ◆ Foreign bodies (you may be advised to attend A&E)

## What you can do to manage the problem?

- ◆ If you are **not** experiencing any of the symptoms on the previous page, the following is recommended:
- ◆ **Olive Oil Drops** – The following needs to be done 2-3 times daily for **14 days**.
  1. Lie on your side with the affected ear uppermost
  2. Pull the outer ear gently backwards and upwards to straighten the ear canal
  3. Put 2-3 drops of olive oil into the affected ear(s) and gently massage just in front of the ear
  4. Stay lying on your side for 10 minutes to allow the wax to soak up the oil.

5. Afterwards, wipe away any excess oil but do not plug your ear with cotton wool as this simply absorbs the oil
6. Your hearing problem may initially worsen after first starting to use the olive oil drops; this is why you are advised to concentrate on treating one ear at a time if both ears are blocked with wax.
7. In most cases, after 14 days, the wax will have softened sufficiently to encourage the wax to come out without further intervention.
8. However, if you feel your hearing is still impaired, please make an appointment with the practice nurse for further advice and management.



## Alternatively

There are now a number of over-the-counter kits available from pharmacies. These contain a wax softener as drops which you use for 3-4 days and a small bulb syringe to enable you to remove the wax from your ear canals yourself. They can easily be purchased from your pharmacy or online by searching for 'ear bulb syringe' e.g. aculife bulb ear syringe, otex express combi pack or macks wax away earwax removal system for examples.

The specially designed ear syringes are designed to create enough pressure to clear wax out of the ear without causing damage to the ear drum. It is very important to use hand-temperature, tepid body temperature water for this process having used olive oil or the drops in the previous days. Prolonged use of the drops in the over-the-counter preparations other than olive oil can cause irritation and soreness and should not be used for more than a few days at a time.