How to Manage Ear Wax

Ear wax is naturally produced by a gland in the ear canal to keep them clean and free from germs and infections.

It usually passes out of the ears harmlessly and without noticing, but sometimes too much builds up and can block the ears.

**What causes a build-up of wax?**

- Production of naturally hard or dry wax
- Having narrow or hairy ear canals
- Elderly – as ear wax becomes drier with age
- Bony growth in the outer part of the ear canal
- Insertion of cotton buds, ear plugs or hearing aids

**Symptoms of Excessive Wax**

Earache: Hearing loss: Tinnitus: Itchiness: Vertigo: Ear Infections

**DO NOT SELF TREAT IF:**

- You have any pain or discharge from the ear
- Past history of perforation of the ear drum
- Ear infection within the last 6 weeks (unless otherwise advised by a clinician)
- History of cleft palate or ear surgery
- Ever been advised to avoid ear irrigation
- If you have a latex allergy
How to treat excessive wax or blocked ears

Don’t try to remove with a cotton bud or any other object as this can damage your ear and push the wax further down the ear onto the ear drum.

You can buy ear drops from your local pharmacy and this helps by softening the wax so it can come out by itself.

Several types of drops are on the market, including olive oil, almond oil or sodium bicarbonate.

Persist with the drops as directed on the leaflet for at least 2 weeks.

There are self-managing irrigating devices on the market for you to irrigate your own ears in a safe manner, such as Portia Ear Syringe or Otex Combi pack available from most chemists. These have been shown to be a safe alternative to ear irrigation by a health professional and gentler on your ear drum.

1. Soften the wax with the drops of your choice for at least a few days.

2. The drops should be at room temperature and instilled in the ear 3 times per day and allowed to soak in.

3. Prepare the syringe by squirting water in and out of it a few times, water should be at body temperature (37C / 98F)

4. Gently pull your ear upwards, backwards and outwards to help straighten the ear canal.

5. Tilt your head to one side and gently squirt one or more bulb syringes of water into your ear

6. Allow the water to remain in your ear for 60 Seconds. Gently tilt your head the opposite way and wiggle your outer ear. The water coming out may be discoloured and / or has pieces of wax / debris in it.

7. You may find that more than one flushing is required.

Repeat on the other ear if this is required.

Rarely this may cause headache & dizziness – usually if the water is too cool.

If symptoms do not improve contact the surgery to arrange a 10min appointment with a nurse for assessment of the problem, but continue with the drops in the meantime.

It is not good practice to carry out ear irrigation on a regular basis as it can exacerbation the problem, many surgeries are now refusing to carry out the procedure.