

Ear Syringing/Ear care

What is ear wax?

Ear wax is normal. It is produced to form a protective coating over the skin inside the ear (ear canal). Ears are normally self-cleaning and wax usually falls out naturally without you noticing.

Why is my ear(s) blocked with wax?

Some people produce too much wax which can lead to a blockage of the ear canal.

You are more likely to get a blockage if you:

- Use cotton buds (Qtips) to clean your ears as this pushes the wax deeper inside the ear
- Wear a hearing aid, ear plugs or use in-ear headphones as these prevent the wax from naturally falling out
- Have narrow ear canals
- Have very hairy ear canals
- Have dry skin problems such as eczema or psoriasis
- Are elderly as the wax you make tends to be drier and harder.

Advice to help you manage ear wax blockage.

1. Olive oil drops

These can be purchased from any local pharmacy and cost about £2 per bottle.

- Lie on your side with the affected ear uppermost
- Pull the outer ear gently backwards and upwards to straighten the ear canal
- Put 2-3 drops of oil into the ear and gently massage over the front of the ear
- Stay laying on your side to allow the oil to soak in for around 5-10mins
- Afterwards, wipe away any excess oil but do not plug your ear with cotton wool as this simply absorbs the oil back up.

You should do this 2-3 x daily for 14 days.

Your hearing problem may initially worsen, but then as the wax softens this will allow the natural falling out process to occur.

If you still have symptoms after using the oil you could then try....

2. Self syringing treatment

Bulb syringes are available over-the-counter from the internet and cost around £5.

- Soften the wax as detailed above
- Use a bowl of warm water and prepare the syringe by squirting this water in and out of it a few times.

- Gently pull the outer ear backwards and upwards to straighten the ear canal
- Fill the bulb with the warm water.
- Tilt your head to one side so the affected ear is facing upwards and gently squirt the bulb full of water into the ear (this is best done, if you have one in the shower, or over a sink, to prevent the excess water spilling onto the floor!)
- Allow the water to remain in your ear for about 1minute. Then tilt your head so that the ear with the water in is now facing downwards and wiggle your outer ear like you would if you had been swimming or had your head under water to encourage the water to come out again. You may see that the water is discoloured or has chunks of wax in it. This is a good thing!
- Repeat the process if felt needed

There are also some over-the-counter kits eg Otex Express Combi Pack which you could also use.

NB this is not suitable for people who have had a perforated ear drum in the past.

3. Formal Ear Syringing

If your ears are still blocked you can book an appointment with one of our nursing team for a review and if it is assessed that you need your ears syringing then you will be added to our waiting list. Wait times vary but can be up to 3 months.

There are private ear syringing services available nearby: their charges vary depending on if requiring one ear or two. If you wish to book a private service we are unable to recommend providers but they are listed on the internet.

Preventing ear wax build up.

If your ears are regularly becoming blocked with wax even after clearing the blockage we suggest that you use olive oil drops as described around once or twice a week to keep the wax soft and to encourage the wax to fall out naturally.

When should you see a GP?

If you experience any of the following, you should see one of the team at the practice.

- Ear pain
- Discharge or bleeding from the ear
- Sudden deafness or buzzing/ringing
- If you have a foreign body in your ear
- dizziness