

Ear Syringing - Self Treatment

Using Olive Oil or Sodium Bicarbonate Ear Drops

The following needs to be done 2-3 times daily for at least 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 or sodium bicarbonate ear drops into the affected ear(s) and gently massage just in front of the ear
4. Stay laying on your side to allow the wax to soak in for around 15 mins
5. Afterwards, wipe away any excess oil but do not plug your ear with cotton wool as this simply absorbs the oil

Your hearing problem may initially worsen after first starting to use the drops, so concentrate on treating one ear at a time if both ears are blocked with wax.

In most cases, after 14 days, the wax will have softened sufficiently to encourage the wax to come out without further intervention. If your ears are regularly becoming blocked with wax after clearing the blockage, we suggest you use olive oil drops as above around once per week to keep the wax soft and encourage the natural process of wax expulsion.

Bulb syringes are available from most pharmacies or online. It is a safe treatment; however there is a small chance (thought to be around 1 in 1000) of complications occurring - such as a perforated ear drum, middle ear infection, external canal infection or causing ringing in the ear (tinnitus). If your ears are still blocked after using the bulb syringe, arrange an appointment - you may be referred for microsuction which is a far safer and more effective ear wax removal treatment than ear syringing

Using a Bulb Syringe

1. Firstly, use olive oil or sodium bicarbonate eardrops in the ear daily for 2-3 weeks. If this does not clear the wax then the bulb syringe can be used.
2. Put some clean warm (not hot) water in a bowl. Squirt the bulb syringe in the water a few times to fill it up with warm water.
3. Hold your head to one side so the affected ear is facing upwards. You can do this in the shower or bath or lie on a bed with a towel underneath your head.
4. If you experience any pain during or before this procedure stop immediately and see a practice nurse or GP for a review.
5. Gently pull your ear in an upwards and outwards direction so that the water gets better access to the ear canal. Hold the nozzle inside the ear (not too deeply) and GENTLY squirt the water from the bulb syringe into the ear (you may need some help from a family member). You can gently squirt more bulb syringes into the ear if required. Leave the water in your ear for 1-3 minutes to soften the wax.
6. Now tilt your head over so the water can fall out. Wiggle the outer part of the ear to help the water and wax come out. You can repeat the procedure if required.
7. Repeat for the other ear if both ears are affected.
8. If you get any pain or if the procedure is unsuccessful, see a practice nurse or GP.