

How to use ear drops – a patient information leaflet

A build-up of ear wax can be treated with eardrops available from your local pharmacy. These can help soften and loosen the earwax, which may help it work its way out naturally.

➤ **Olive oil:**

- This comes as a spray or drops and is used to **soften** the wax - it is advisable to buy a bottle of olive oil and 'dropper' from your local chemist.
- This is gentler and is often recommended if you have eczema in your ears.
- Allow the olive oil to reach room temperature before using.
- To treat ear wax you should apply this 2-3 drops **twice a day for AT LEAST 7 nights**.
- After application: lie with affected ear uppermost for 5-10 minutes.
- It is not necessary to put cotton wool in your ears afterwards.
- We never recommend you use cotton buds in your ears.
- Ideally, you should apply this treatment once daily (perhaps before sleeping) to prevent the build-up of wax on a long-term basis after the wax build up is clear.

➤ **Sodium Bicarbonate solution:**

- Use these drops for up to 1 week, applying 2 times a day with 3-4 drops in the ear.
- The sodium bicarbonate **dissolves** the wax.
- Your hearing may temporarily worsen as the wax swells before it dissolves.
- For this reason, we suggest treating one ear at a time.
- The drops should be left in your ear for up to 3 minutes.
- When it improves, you could use the drops less frequently.

➤ **Other ear wax drops:** There are other drops (i.e. Otex) - your pharmacist can advise.

➤ **Using Ear Drops:**

The instillation of olive oil into the ear is important **BEFORE** ear irrigation to make the wax easier to remove OR to encourage the normal expulsion of wax from the outer ear.

1. Lie down on your side with the affected ear uppermost
2. Gently pull the outer ear (pinna) backwards and upwards (see picture below).
3. Drop 2-3 drops of oil, at **room temperature**, into the ear canal and then massage the area in front of the ear to help the oil run down the ear canal more easily.
4. Remain lying down for **10 minutes** and then get up and wipe away any excess oil.
5. **DO NOT** put any cotton wool in the ear following the drops, as this will absorb the oil.
6. Repeat the procedure with the opposite ear (if necessary).

