

Patient Information Leaflet

EAR CARE ADVICE

Earwax helps to keep your ears healthy. It is designed to catch dust and foreign particles before they reach delicate parts of the ear and it helps to carry away dead skin cells from the eardrum. Jaw movement assists with this.

The ear is normally self-cleaning and produces the correct amount of earwax. Constantly trying to remove the earwax yourself – i.e. with cotton buds, can make the problem worse by stimulating the wax glands to produce more wax or by pushing the wax further in! **You may even damage and scar the ear canal and/or eardrum by inserting cotton buds.**

Ear irrigation (syringing) can cause damage to the ear leading to infection or perforation of the eardrum.

If earwax is causing you a problem, the safest treatment is to use olive oil or sodium bicarbonate drops available from any community pharmacist or chemist.

➤ USING OLIVE OIL EAR or SODIUM BICARBONATE DROPS

Drops should be instilled into the ear(s) for AT LEAST 7 days (twice a day)

The instillation of olive oil into the ear is particularly 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).



This should soften the wax enough so that it runs out naturally. It does not harm the ear. If you know you have an earwax problem and that your ear is healthy, you can try the treatment yourself. We DO NOT recommend specially formulated preparations that can be purchased; this is because they can sometimes irritate healthy ears.

If you have repeated build-up of wax, you can keep it free by using olive oil or sodium bicarbonate drops (1-2 drops) once per week to help keep the wax smooth.

If you have, or suspect you have any kind of ear problem other than wax, or are experiencing pain or discharge you should NOT put anything down the ear until seeking medical advice.