

EAR CARE DO's AND DON'Ts

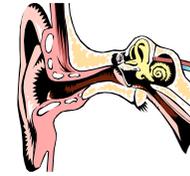
DON'Ts

- Don't put anything into the ear such as cotton buds, hairgrips or matches in an attempt to clean your ears, these can damage the delicate lining of the ear canal and may perforate the ear drum.
- Don't block the ear canal with cotton wool as this will interfere with the natural cleansing action.
- Only use ear plugs for limited periods of time.

DO's

- Use olive oil at room temperature to soften wax.
- Inform the nurse of any previous ear surgery, especially mastoid surgery.
- Inform the nurse if a history of ear discharge or ear aches.
- Keep your ears dry.

EAR WAX AND HOW TO DEAL WITH IT



An information and advice Leaflet for patients

In the interest of safety and to make sure irrigation is appropriate, patients must have ears checked by a Doctor or Nurse prior to irrigation.

We only offer 3 dedicated ear syringe appointments per week and patients may be placed on a waiting list.

We advise regular use of olive oil drops to soften wax. Alternatively, there are now over-the-counter kits available from pharmacies. These contain wax softener, which you use for 3-4 days and a small bulb syringe to enable to remove the wax from your ear canals yourself.

In many cases, after 14 days, the wax will have softened sufficiently to encourage the wax to come out without further intervention. However, if you feel your hearing is still impaired, please make an appointment with the nurse for further advice and management.

WHAT IS EAR WAX?

- Wax forms a protective coating to the lining of the ear canal.
- Ear wax is a natural product which is vital for a healthy ear and when soft will come out due to the natural cleaning ability of the ear.
- The amount of wax produced varies from person to person.
- The elderly, people who wear hearing aids and those with narrow ear canals are more likely to have a build up of wax.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

- The ear may feel full.
- The hearing may be reduced.
- Discomfort.
- There may be intermittent tinnitus (noise in the ear).

DIAGNOSIS

- A doctor or nurse can confirm the presence of wax.
- The need for ear irrigation follows a strict criteria, the nurse will examine the ear and decide if irrigation is necessary.

TREATMENTS

- Olive oil; drops should be used for up to 6 weeks to soften ear wax, which may then come out of its own accord. Other softening agents are not recommended as they can alter the natural acidity of the ear canal which helps to protect against ear infections.
- **Ear irrigation is ONLY considered if olive oil drops are unsuccessful in removing ear wax.**

HOW TO USE EAR DROPS

- Lie down with the affected ear uppermost.
- Pour approximately 3 drops of olive oil into the ear. This should be at room temperature using a dropper (this can be purchased from the chemist). Grip the top of the ear and move it gently backwards and outwards (to straighten the canal). Massage just in front of the ear gently.
- Remain in this position for 10 minutes, allowing the olive oil to settle. Do not plug the ear with cotton wool as this will absorb the oil. Wipe away any excess.
- Repeat this procedure for the other ear if necessary.
- The procedure should be repeated 2-3 times a day for 7-14 days depending on the advice from the nurse.

In some cases, after 14 days, the wax will have softened sufficiently to encourage the wax to come out without further intervention. However, it can take up to 6 weeks. If you feel your hearing is still impaired, please make an appointment with the nurse for further advice and management.

You should not start to pour any softening product into your ear until you have been examined and advised to do so by the nurse, as an underdiagnosed perforation may be present.

If you suspect you have any ear problems other than wax, you should seek medical advice.