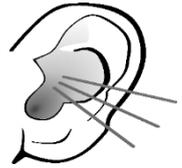


Ear Wax



Ear Wax

- ◆ Ear wax is normal it provides protection for your ears
- ◆ Your ears are self-cleaning
- ◆ The movement of your jaw while eating and talking moves the wax along the canal
- ◆ Ear wax only becomes a problem if it causes deafness, pain or if a health professional needs a clear view of the ear drum

What makes ear wax worse?

- ◆ The amount of wax produced varies from person to person
- ◆ Some people produce excessive amounts of wax and this can block the ear canal
- ◆ Wearing a hearing aid, ear plugs and or head phones can interfere with wax expulsion
- ◆ Narrow and or hairy ear canals
- ◆ If you are elderly – the wax produced may be harder and drier
- ◆ Dry skin in people who suffer with eczema or psoriasis

What you shouldn't do, some suggestions!

- ◆ Do not use cotton buds to clean the ear. This forces the wax deeper into the canal and can cause damage, trauma and possible infection
- ◆ Do not use objects such as matches, hair grips, crochet hooks, knitting needles, keys etc. this can cause trauma and possible infection
- ◆ If your ears are itchy do not scratch or rub them with your finger nails or any other objects
- ◆ Do not use anything smaller than your elbow in your ear!!

What helps?

- ◆ Try and keep your ears dry. When washing your hair, showering or swimming putting some Vaseline around the inner part of your ear can help
- ◆ Don't put your head under the water when bathing
- ◆ If you regularly get blocked ears, use ear drops weekly/fortnightly to soften the wax

When to see the GP or Advanced Practitioner

If you are experiencing the following symptoms:

- ◆ Pain
- ◆ Discharge or bleeding from the ear
- ◆ Sudden deafness
- ◆ Dizziness
- ◆ Foreign bodies (you may be advised to attend A&E)

What you can do to manage the problem?

- ◆ If you are **not** experiencing **any** of the symptoms above, the following is recommended:
 - ◆ **Drops/Spray** – It is recommended that this is done 2-3 times daily for at least 5 days
 - ◆ [NICE Guidelines: Management of Earwax](https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/NG112)
www.earcarecentre.com/Patients/Earcare/Wax
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 into the affected ear(s) and gently massage just in front of the ear
 4. Stay lying on your side for 10 minutes to allow the wax to soak up the drops.
 5. Afterwards, wipe away any excess but do not plug your ear with cotton wool as this simply absorbs the drops
 6. Your hearing problem may initially worsen after first starting to using the drops; this is why you are advised to concentrate on treating one ear at a time if both ears are blocked with wax.
 7. In most cases, the wax will have softened sufficiently to encourage the wax to come out without further intervention.
 8. However, if you feel your hearing is still impaired, please make an appointment with the practice nurse for further advice and management.

Self-irrigation

Patients are advised that there is very little clinical based research available on self-irrigation. Care needs to be taken to ensure there is no trauma and or infection as result of self-irrigation.

For further advice please speak to your practice nurse.

Ear Irrigation

This is only usually considered if the above recommendations have proved to be unsuccessful. It is helpful if Ear wax is softened for at least 5 days before attempting irrigation. This may need to be repeated if the first attempt at irrigation is not successful. (NICE Guidance June 2018).

If ear irrigation is recommended you will be referred to a specialist service.

Ear irrigation is not carried out at this practice.

Ongoing self-care

If your ears are regularly becoming blocked with wax, after clearing the blockage, it may be helpful to use ear drops once a week or fortnightly to keep the wax soft and encourage the natural process of wax expulsion.

This information is based on recommendations from:

The Rotherham Primary Ear Care Centre www.earcarecentre.com

NICE Guidelines: Management of Earwax. (June 2018)