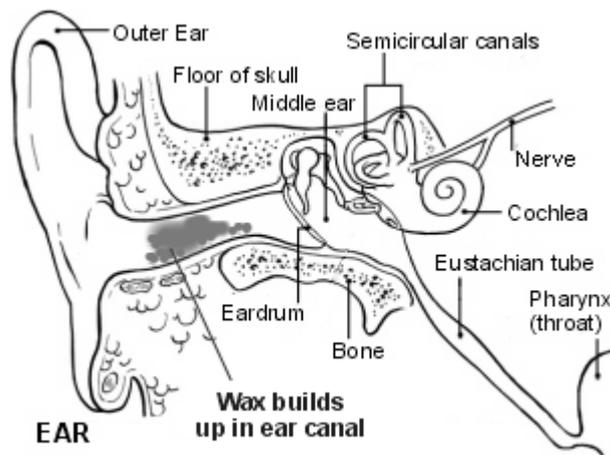


Ear Syringing/Ear Care – Self Help for Patients

If there is a build-up of wax in your ear(s) please read the following self-help guide as you may not need an appointment.

What is ear wax?

Ear wax is normal and is produced to form a protective coating over the skin in the ear canal. Ears are normally self-cleaning – the movement of your jaw whilst eating and talking helps to move the wax along the canal where it will usually fall out naturally without you noticing.



Why is my ear blocked with wax?

The amount of ear wax produced varies from person to person; some people produce excessive amounts which can lead to a blockage in the ear canal.

You are more likely to develop a blockage of wax in the canal if you:

- use cotton ear buds to clean your ears as this pushes the wax deeper into the canal
- wear a hearing aid, ear plugs or use in-ear speakers for iPods or similar - as these can all interfere with the natural process of wax expulsion
- have abnormally narrow ear canals
- have a particularly hairy ear canal
- are elderly – because the ear wax you produce is drier and harder
- have a dry skin problem such as eczema or psoriasis

Advice to help you manage and prevent ear wax blockage

If you experience any of the following, you should seek advice from your GP or Nurse Practitioner

- **pain**
- **discharge or bleeding from the ear**
- **sudden deafness or buzzing**
- **foreign bodies in the ear**
- **dizziness**

Prevention

If your ears are regularly becoming blocked with wax, after clearing the blockage we will usually suggest that you use olive oil drops as above around **once per week** to keep the wax soft and encourage the natural process of wax expulsion. Do NOT use cotton buds – they only make things worse.

Treatment:

Step One- Olive oil Drops

The following needs to be done 2 -3 times daily for a minimum of 14 days.

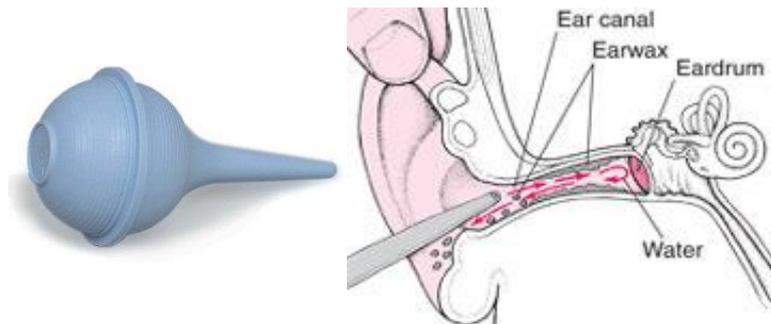
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|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lie on your side with the most affected ear uppermost• Pull the outer ear gently backwards and upwards to straighten the ear canal• Put 2-3 drops of olive oil into the affected ear(s) and gently massage just in front of the ear• Stay laying on your side to allow the wax to soak in for around 10 mins• 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 olive oil drops; this is why we advise you to concentrate on treating one ear at a time if both ears are blocked with wax.



Proceed to Step Two if no results.

Step Two- Self Syringing with an Ear Syringing Bulb



The ear syringing bulb can be purchased from any chemist on its own or with ear drops as combination pack. Instructions on how to use it will be given by the chemist. Examples include the *Portia Rubber 60 ml Ear Syringe* and the *Otex Express Combi pack*. Ear syringing bulbs are widely used in the US and Europe and are the standard way of managing ear wax in those regions.

The bulb is very easy to use, safe and reusable. It is preferable to use olive oil drops instead of hydrogen peroxide drops which may be supplied in a combination pack.



Proceed to Step 3 if no improvement

Step Three- Referral for Microsuction

Patients can self-refer to a private microsuction service. Referral will be made by the clinician where appropriate to ENT to be added to their waiting list.

Further information is available from www.patient.co.uk or from NHS 111 on 111.

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