**BLOCKED EARS DUE TO WAX**

**SELF-CARE GUIDELINES FOR PATIENTS**

**What is earwax?**

Earwax is a natural secretion, which forms a protective coating on the skin in the ear canal. The quantity of earwax produced varies greatly from person to person.

If you think you have a build-up of earwax, do NOT try to clean the ear canal with cotton wool buds. This can make things worse, as you will push some earwax deeper inside. It may also cause an ear infection.

You only need to remove earwax if wax build-up is causing symptoms such as dulled hearing or problems with a hearing aid.

**How to remove earwax**

**Ear drops**

Earwax usually falls out on its own. If it doesn’t and blocks your ear, put two or three drops of ordinary olive oil into the ear two or three times a day for two to three weeks.

This softens the wax so that it comes out of its own accord without harming the ear. You will not necessarily see wax come out. It often seems to come out unnoticed.

If you are prone to repeated wax build-up, you can continue to use olive oil drops twice a week to prevent recurrence. You can continue for any length of time, but three weeks is usually enough.

If olive oil does not work, you can buy sodium bicarbonate drops from pharmacies.

1. Warm the drops to room temperature before using them
2. Lie on your side with the affected ear facing up when putting in drops
3. Gently pull and push your outer ear to work the drops in.
4. Stay lying down for 10 minutes to allow the drops to soak into the earwax.

**Bulb syringing**

In most cases, eardrops will clear a plug of earwax. However if this is unsuccessful a bulb syringe may be an alternative way to clear your ears from wax.

An ear bulb syringe is a small bulb shaped rubber object, which can be filled with water and then used to squirt water gently into the ears to remove earwax.

The main benefit of the bulb syringe is that you can use it yourself without needing to make an appointment with a doctor or nurse.

Bulb syringes can be purchased from a pharmacy or on the internet from Amazon or other websites.

Bulb syringes should not be used if you have pain in your ear, a history of eardrum perforation in the affected ear, symptoms of ear infection or previous surgery.

It is essential to use olive oil drops twice a day for at least 14 days prior to bulb syringing to soften the wax.

1. Use clean warm(not hot) water
2. Prepare the bulb syringe by squirting it in the water a few times to fill it up with warm water.
3. Gently pull your outer ear up and out to help straighten out the canal and allow better access for the water.
4. Tilt your head so the ear to be treated is facing upwards.
5. Place the tip of the syringe into the opening of the ear and gently squirt one or more bulbs of water into your ear. You can do this in the shower or bath or lie on the bed with a towel underneath your head to catch the water.
6. Allow the water to remain in your ear for at least 60 seconds.
7. Gently tilt your head in the opposite direction and wiggle the outer ear to help the water and wax come out. This could be done over a sink.

If you experience pain stop the procedure and contact your doctor if it does not subside.

**Ear irrigation(syringing) or microsuction**

Rarely, the above measures do not work or may be contra-indicated. If this is the case you can contact your usual doctor to discuss the best option for you. Many private hearing aid providers will offer microsuction to remove earwax for a fee. There is also an NHS microsuction clinic with limited availability for certain conditions.

**Your usual doctor can be contacted by telephoning between 8.30am- 9.30am on the days that they are working to request a telephone consultation for that day.**

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