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Ear Wax Removal

Self-help Guide

**What is earwax?**

Earwax forms a protective coating of the skin in the ear canal and minute amounts are made continually. The quantity of earwax varies from person to person and may cause a feeling of fullness and dullness in hearing. A plug of wax is not serious, but can be a nuisance. Do **not** try to clean the ear canal with cotton wool buds. This only pushes the wax in further – let the ear clean itself.

**What can I do if there is a build-up of wax causing problems?**

Clinical evidence suggests that using ear drops for up to 8 weeks to aid removal of wax is AS EFFECTIVE as ear syringing and does not carry the same level of COMPLICATIONS that can be associated with ear syringing. 1 in 1000 patients complain of ear syringing complications which include: perforation/ infection/ permanent hearing loss/ tinnitus/ dizziness and headaches. Using Ear drops is also preferable as it does not stimulate the production of wax like syringing does.

***Evidence- NICE and Cochrane systematic review of using ear drops vs ear syringing (Burton + Doree 2009) and recent guidance form Primary Care Ear Trainers 2014 and expert opinion Handzel et al 2003***

**How to instil Ear Drops:**

* Eardrops alone will often clear a plug of wax, and you can buy drops from the pharmacist, e.g. sodium bicarbonate, or olive oil.
1. Warm the drops to room temperature before using.
2. Put a few drops in the affected ear.
3. Lie with the affected ear uppermost when putting in drops.
4. Remain in this position for a few minutes to allow the drops to penetrate.
5. Drops should be repeated at least twice daily for up to 8 weeks.
6. If your symptoms are still persisting after 8 weeks, please book a routine appointment with our minor ailments nurse.

