

## EAR WAX

Ear wax is a normal, oily substance that helps to protect your ears. It usually comes out of your ears by itself, helped by the movement of your jaw.

Having a little bit of wax is good for our ears but it can sometimes build up and this causes discomfort or other ear problems.

Ear wax build up can affect anyone, although those who have narrow or hairy ear canals or wear hearing aids regularly may be more likely to have frequent ear wax build up.

## WHEN TO SEE A GP?

- You are experiencing pain
- There is a discharge or bleeding from the ear
- Sudden deafness
- Vertigo (a spinning sensation) may be caused by a wax blockage
- Foreign body in the ear canal

## DO'S AND DON'T'S

You should **NEVER** try to remove ear wax from your ears using cotton buds, fingers or anything else into your ears. This may push wax deeper into your ear or cause harm your ear drum leading to perforation, pain, or infection.

What you **CAN** do is use olive oil to soften your ear wax, which can help it fall out of your ear or make it easier for a professional to remove.

Olive oil ear drops naturally soften the wax and may also be used once or twice a week as a preventative measure once the wax has been cleared.

**Do not use drops if you have a hole in your eardrum (a perforated eardrum)**

## HOW TO APPLY:

Olive oil drops may be obtained from the pharmacist.

Make sure the drops are at room temperature and pop 2-3 drops into the affected ear. Lie with the affected ear uppermost when putting in drops. Stay like this for 5-10 minutes to allow the olive oil drops to soak into the ear wax. The ear wax is gradually softened. Usually, three weeks is long enough. Flakes or crusts of ear wax often fall out bit by bit, but you may also not notice the wax as it comes out of your ear. Do not put cotton wool into the ear canal following the application of oil as this draws the oil back out. Just wipe away any excess oil that comes out of the ear.

Ear drops alone will often clear a plug of earwax. If applying olive oil hasn't helped sodium bicarbonate drops are an alternative option which can be obtained from the pharmacist. Olive oil and bicarbonate sodium drops are available on the minor ailment service but there are alternative over the counter preparations available to purchase such as:

Otex Express Combi pack - Otex Express Combi Pack ear wax treatment to soften hardened ear wax and gently help it disperse, and a bulb syringe to irrigate the ear after treatment.

As these preparations may make your hearing worse initially as it softens the wax, we would suggest treating one ear at a time if both ears are affected.

### EAR WAX REMOVAL WITH PRIVATE PROVIDERS

While olive oil or OTC products can help relieve some of the symptoms of ear wax build up, some people will still need to have ear wax removed by a professional.

There are some private providers offering wax removal at a cost. If you do decide to have wax removed this way, ensure the professional you see is suitably qualified and uses a safe method of removal such as micro suction (using a small suction device to gently remove ear wax).

The list provided below is a guide only for information. Aboyne Medical Practice are not making any recommendations on private providers.

- ABERDEEN HEARING SERVICES:

<http://www.aberdeenhearingservices.co.uk/earwax-removal>

- BOOTS:

<https://www.bootshearingcare.com/ear-wax-removal/>

- BOWES HEARING CARE:

<https://boweshearingcare.co.uk/>

Tel: 01358 723547 (Home visits available)

- BRYCE HEARING SERVICES:

<https://brycehearingservices.co.uk/hearing-aids-aberdeen/wax-removal/>

Tel: 01224 647652

- Charles Michies Pharmacy

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- SPECSAVERS

<https://www.specsavers.co.uk/hearing/earwax/earwax-removal>

Current Safety Guidelines advise that ear syringing should no longer be considered a routine procedure.

Ear irrigation is only recommended in the rare occasions where ear drops, and bulb syringing has failed to work. Ear syringing can lead to ear infections, perforated ear drum and tinnitus (persistent noise) and therefore it is only performed in exceptional circumstances. If you think you have persisting wax despite taking the above measures, please make an appointment with your doctor or nurse to discuss.