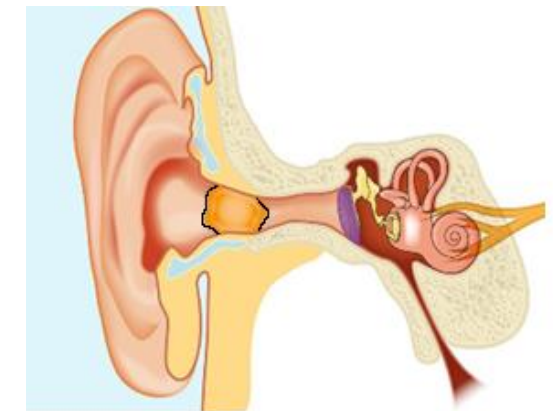


Self-Care: Management of Ear Wax

Earwax is a normal body secretion, which protects the lining of the ear canal. It is sometimes known as cerumen. Usually, it is not necessary to remove wax from your ear, as your body will do this naturally. The amount of earwax we produce is very individual and it may only become a problem if it is impacted in the ear.



How to Use Ear Drop Correctly

1.

Lay a folded towel on a kitchen or bathroom counter Or bed or sofa if this is more comfortable



2.

Lay your head on the towel with the affected ear facing upwards



3.

Gently pull your ear out and upwards to straighten your ear canal



4.

Administer the recommended number of drops into your ear canal



5.

Gently push on your ear flap to encourage the liquid into your ear



6.

Stay here for 5-10 minutes to allow to oil to absorb into the wax.



General Information

The amount of earwax produced varies from person to person. You are more likely to develop a blockage of wax in the ear canal if you:

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

Earwax only becomes a problem if it causes deafness, discomfort, tinnitus, whistling from a hearing aid device or if your Health professional requires a clear view of your eardrum.

Please seek advice from your GP or nurse, and do not attempt to self-treat if any of the following apply to you:

- Pain, sudden deafness or buzzing in the ear
- A history of ear drum perforation or previous surgery in the affected ear
- Symptoms of infection in the ear – usually pain or a smelly discharge
- Foreign body in the ear

How do I self-care manage my wax build up?

We recommend the following ear-drop regime for adults and children over 5 years of age (Children under the age of 5 should not self-manage and parents should contact the GP practice or their Audiologist if it is thought that the wax is problematic). If this measure fails, please make an appointment with your nurse for further advice and management.

Olive Oil Drops

The following needs to be done 2-3 times daily for 7 days (please see diagram over leaf)

- Lie on your side with the 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 and gently massage just in front of the ear
- Stay laying on your side to allow the oil to soak in for around 5-10 minutes
- Afterwards, wipe away any excess oil. You do not need to place cotton wool in the ear, as this will absorb the oil.

Your hearing problem may initially worsen after first starting to use olive oil drops; if you are concerned about this it may be advised that you concentrate on treating one ear at a time.

In most cases, after 7 days, the wax will have softened sufficiently to encourage the wax to come out without further intervention.

There are many different wax softeners available, but research has not shown any one to be better than the other for softening wax, and some may irritate the delicate skin of the ear canal. For this reason, it is recommended that you use olive oil.

Ear candles are **not** a safe option as they may result in serious injury. The use of cotton buds, matchsticks, hairpins, and paper clips can cause damage to the ear canal or eardrum; therefore, they are **not** recommended.

If you are prone to wax build up, it is recommended that you use olive oil once or twice a week or fortnight to prevent re-occurrence.

For further advice on self-management contact:

Choose Well advice at pharmacies

NHS Direct 0845 4647

Once you have seen the Nurse / GP at your surgery **and** followed the self-management regime for 7 days, you will be referred to the ear wax microsuction clinic in your local area.

Continue applying the drops right up until the night before your appointment, even if it is longer than the 7 day regime.