

## Care of Your Ears

Ear syringing is used to clear ear wax from ears that is causing reduced hearing. This service will no longer be available at the surgery so this information leaflet has been designed to help you care for your ears. Ear syringing is an invasive treatment and carries with it a number of risks, including:

- perforation of the ear drum
- increased risk of infection
- worsening of tinnitus and vertigo symptoms

**There is also some evidence that having your ears syringed may result in the need to have the procedure more frequently as the ear's own cleaning mechanism may become disturbed.**

We now advise conservative treatment to soften the wax and promote its natural migration from the ear. **Remember - wax is only a problem if it is causing reduced hearing.**

Conservative treatment may take 2-4 weeks to be effective and people who have had their ears syringed frequently may find it will take longer. Most people should see some, if not complete, relief of symptoms at around 10-14 days with effective application of olive oil (see next section on conservative treatment).

## Conservative Treatment for Treating Ear Wax / "Blocked Ears"

The aim is to soften the wax that is blocking your ear in order to promote its natural migration from the ear. **It is important to note that if you are treating your ears correctly the sensation of blocked hearing may become worse before it gets better.** This is because as the dry hard wax softens it swells and blocks the ear further but it means you are treating the ear correctly and should continue and persevere. There are several options for self-care of blocked ears:

### OLIVE OIL DROPS

The use of olive oil is advised to soften the wax in your ear unless directed otherwise by your doctor. There are a number of products available in shops/pharmacies aimed at treating blocked ears, but these can be costly and may contain ingredients that irritate the ear, such as hydrogen peroxide. Olive oil is effective and much cheaper. You do not need to buy a special olive oil from the chemist. If you have olive oil at home in the kitchen this will be fine, you will simply need to purchase an ear dropper bottle or small pipette.

### What you will need:

- Olive oil
- Ear dropper bottle or small pipette
- Vaseline and cotton wool ball (if unable to lie for 20 minutes each time)

### Method:

2 drops of olive oil should be instilled into the affected ear 2-3 times daily. The olive oil should be at room or body temperature **but no hotter! DO NOT** heat oil in a pan or the microwave as you may cause a burn to the inner ear.

# ASHFIELD SURGERY

After instilling the oil you should either keep your head tilted with treated ear uppermost for 20 minutes to allow oil to be absorbed into the wax, or smear a piece of cotton wool (no smaller than half a ball) with Vaseline and place this Vaseline side just into the outer part of your ear for a minimum of 20 minutes or overnight. Please note if you do not put the Vaseline on the cotton wool it will simply act like a wick and suck the olive oil back out reducing the effectiveness of your treatment.

## **SODIUM BICARBONATE DROPS**

If the ear wax has not cleared, follow the same procedure as above for 3-4 days using sodium bicarbonate drops which can be obtained from your local pharmacy.

## **BULB SYRINGE**

If your ear is still not clear, cleanse the ear canal of any remaining ear wax or drops by using a bulb syringe as follows:

- Fill bulb syringe with warm water. Please do not use either very cold water or very hot.
- Gently position the nozzle of the bulb syringe into the opening of the ear canal, but no further.
- Cleanse the ear canal by gently squeezing the bulb, allowing the rinse water to run out of the ear into a wash basin.

A bulb syringe can be obtained from various sources but your community pharmacy may be able to order these for you and advise on safe use.

As previously mentioned, a conservative treatment to remove ear wax may take 2-4 weeks to be effective and longer for those who have had ear syringing in the past. If you can hear normally again simply continue with a maintenance dose of 1-2 drops of olive oil weekly to keep the wax being produced soft and avoid further blockages.

If you experience any PAIN or DISCOMFORT you should **STOP** treatment and seek medical advice. **Likewise, if conservative treatment does not resolve a wax blockage you may need to see the nurse or doctor for further advice and treatment options.**

If you would prefer to attend a hearing centre, the following all accept self-referrals:

<u>Specsavers Hearing Centre</u> Unit 4, Red Rose Centre 57B Lower Parade B72 1XX Tel: 0121-354 4143 Cost: £35 per ear	<u>Scrivens Hearing Care</u> 115 The Parade B72 1PU Tel: 0121-354 4534 Cost: £40 one ear, £60 for both	<u>Boots Walk-In Centre</u> 66 High Street Birmingham B4 7TA Tel: 0121-255 4500 Free of charge if registered with a GP in the UK
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The following hearing centre offers ear wax removal by **micro suction only** (however please note that we are unable to offer any recommendations on private companies):

### Sutton Hearing Centre

46 South Parade  
B72 1QY  
Tel: 0121-321 3153  
Cost: £40 one ear, £60 for both