

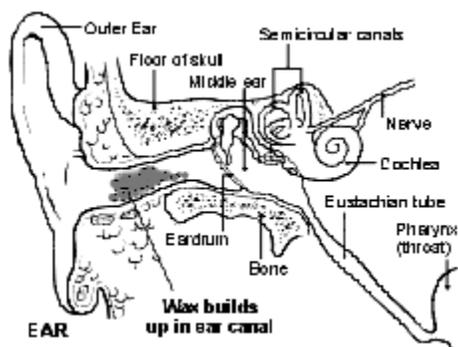
EAR CARE LEAFLET

Patient Information Leaflet – BLOCKED EARS?

This leaflet contains information on ear wax and gives advice on safe and gentle removal of ear wax when needed.

If there is a buildup of wax in your ear(s) please read the following self-help guide as you may not need an appointment.

What is ear wax?



Ear wax is normal and is produced to form a protective coating over the skin in the ear canal. Ears are normally self-cleaning – the movement of your jaw whilst eating and talking helps to move the wax along the canal where it will usually fall out naturally without you noticing.

Why is my ear blocked with wax?

The amount of ear wax produced varies from person to person; some people produce excessive amounts which can lead to a blockage in the ear canal.

You are more likely to develop a blockage of wax in the canal if you:

- use cotton ear buds to clean the ear as this pushes the wax deeper into the canal
- wear a hearing aid, ear plugs or use in-ear speakers for i-pods or similar - as these can all interfere with the natural process of wax expulsion
- have abnormally narrow ear canals
- have a particularly hairy ear canal
- are elderly – because the ear wax you produce is drier and harder
- have a dry skin problem such as eczema or psoriasis. Keeping your ears dry will improve this condition. The easiest way to keep ears dry when bathing/showering is by using a small piece of cotton-wool smeared in Vaseline/petroleum Jelly.

Advice to help you manage and prevent ear wax blockage

Ear wax only becomes a problem if it causes deafness, discomfort or if your Health professional requires a clear view of your ear drum.

If you experience any of the following, you should seek advice from your GP or Nurse Practitioner:

- pain
- discharge or bleeding from the ear
- sudden deafness or buzzing
- foreign bodies in the ear
- dizziness

If you are not experiencing any of the above, we recommend that you manage the blockage as following:

Olive Oil Drops

The following needs to be done 2- 3 times daily for 14 days.

- 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(s) and gently massage just in front of the ear
- Stay laying on your side to allow the wax to soak in for around 10 mins
- Afterwards, wipe away any excess oil but do not plug your ear with cotton wool as this simply absorbs the oil

Your hearing problem may initially worsen after first starting to use the olive oil drops; this is why we advise you to concentrate on treating one ear at a time if both ears are blocked with wax.

In most cases, after 14 days, the wax will have softened sufficiently to encourage the wax to come out without further intervention. However, if you feel your hearing is still impaired, please make an appointment with the Advanced Nurse Practitioner for further advice and management.

If your ears are regularly becoming blocked with wax, after clearing the blockage we will usually suggest you use olive oil drops as above around once per week to keep the wax soft and encourage the natural process of wax expulsion.