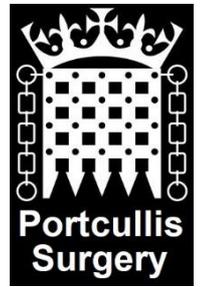


# Patient Information Leaflet

# EAR WAX



Portcullis Surgery is committed to providing best practice & high-quality medical care. Ear syringing is no longer considered to be the 1<sup>st</sup> line treatment for the clearing of ear wax and thus is not recommended for routine use by NHS in General Practice. It is for this reason, to provide the best evidenced medical care, that we do not offer routine ear syringing as a first line treatment.

Current guidelines state that ear drops should be used to soften the wax which will then enable the natural movement of the wax from the ear. Further information and treatment options are available in this leaflet.

## Points to remember:

- Ear wax is normal and it provides protection for your ears.
- The movement of your jaw whilst eating & talking helps to move the wax along the canal.
- A plug of earwax is not a serious problem. You only need to remove earwax if it is causing symptoms such as dulled hearing or when fitting a hearing aid.

## What makes ear wax worse?

- The amount of wax produced varies from person to person.
- Some people produce excess wax and this can block the ear.
- Wearing a hearing aid, ear plugs or headphones can interfere with wax expulsion.
- Narrow and/or hairy ear canals.
- If you are elderly - the wax produced may be harder and drier.
- Dry skin in people who suffer with eczema or psoriasis.

## What you should not do?

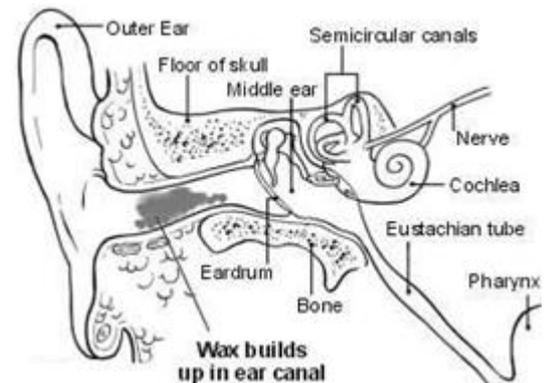
- Do not use a cotton bud. This forces the wax deeper and can cause damage and infection.
- If your ears are itchy do not scratch or rub them with your fingernails or any other objects.
- ***Do not use anything smaller than your elbow in your ear!***

## What helps?

- Try and keep your ears dry. When washing your hair, showering or swimming putting some Vaseline around the inner part of your ear can help.
- Do not put your head under the water when bathing.
- You may benefit from regular use of ear drops.

## Using ear drops:

- Ear drops alone will clear a plug of earwax in most cases. Put 2 or 3 drops of ordinary olive oil down the ear using a 'dropper' 2 or 3 times a day for 2-3 weeks. This softens the wax so that it then runs out of its own accord without harming the ear. You can continue for any length of time, but 3 weeks is usually enough.
- If olive oil does not work you can buy sodium bicarbonate drops from your local pharmacy.
- However, you can keep using ear drops to soften the wax. If you are prone to repeated wax build-up you can continue to use olive oil drops twice a week to prevent recurrence.
- **Do not use any ears drops if you have a hole in your eardrum (called a perforated eardrum).**



### **How to best use ear drops?**

1. Warm the drops to room temperature before using them
2. Pour a few drops into the affected ear
3. Lie with the affected ear uppermost when putting in drops
4. Stay like this for 10 minutes to allow the drops to soak into the earwax

### **Alternatively, i.e. IF SIMPLE EAR DROPS DON'T WORK:**

There are now many over-the-counter kits available from pharmacies or online (search ear wax bulb syringe) and research shows this is safe and effective.

These contain a wax softener as drops which you use for 3-4 days and a small bulb syringe to enable you to remove the wax from your ear canals yourself. The specially designed ear syringes are designed to create just enough pressure to clear wax out of the ear without causing damage to the ear drum.

**It is very important to follow the kit's instructions.**



### **When to seek help?**

If you are experiencing any of the following symptoms:

- Pain in ear
- Discharge or bleeding from the ear
- Sudden deafness or significantly reduced hearing
- Dizziness
- Foreign bodies (you may be advised to attend MIU/A&E)

**Ear irrigation is no longer recommended as first line treatment for blocked ears.**

**Ear syringing can lead to ear infections, perforated ear drum and tinnitus (persistent noise).**

### **If you are not improving:**

1. Book a telephone appointment with a practice nurse ideally Heidi or Joanne.
2. They will decide if you need to be seen to have a look inside your ears to check if they are blocked and might carry out some simple hearing tests.
3. You may be referred to the ENT department of your nearest hospital for more specialised treatments.
4. You will be asked to use olive oil or use an ear wax bulb syringe for 1-2 weeks if you have not done so already and given this leaflet.
5. If there is no improvement then they will book you on for a review and if needed will book you in to the next available ear syringing clinic appointment.
6. **Please note we will prioritise all patients who have been referred for an audiology appointment for hearing loss on proof of a letter with an audiology appointment so if you do not have an audiology appointment you may have to wait some weeks for the next available ear syringing appointment.**

### **Private micro-suction as an alternative to ear syringing:**

- We do not currently provide micro-suction as it is not a treatment offered by the NHS for patients who have ear wax. However, if you feel you would prefer micro-suction you could contact Interhear in Shrewsbury. They can be contacted directly on 0800 002 9503 or emailed via the following link:
  - <https://interhearing.com/ear-wax-removal-in-shrewsbury/>
- Micro-suction removal treatment is a far gentler procedure than other types of ear wax removal. It is also suitable for patients who are about to fly, are already hearing aid users, have previous ear drum damage or have impacted ear wax.