

# Earwax Treatment

Wax normally comes out of the ear with the skin of the ear canal which grows from deep inside and moves to the outside over about 2 weeks. The presence of wax in the ear is normal and protective.

In some people the wax builds up and blocks the ear causing hearing difficulties. Ear syringing has been routinely offered to patients in the past but is not without problems. It can lead to ear infections, perforated ear drums and tinnitus (persistent noise). Syringing also appears to promote further wax build up.

**The current advice from specialists is to try and avoid syringing and instead use eardrops to soften and gently clean the ear canal.**

Put 2 or 3 drops of ordinary olive oil down the ear 2 or 3 times a day for **1 week**. This softens the wax so that it then runs out of its own accord. It does not harm the ear. You can continue for any length of time, but 1 week is usually enough. You may not see wax come out. It often seems to come out unnoticed. If, after 1 week or more, you are still deaf from wax, you will need to make an appointment with a nurse to decide what should be done.

If you **know** you have a wax problem causing deafness and that your ear is healthy you can start the treatment for yourself. We recommend olive oil only. Olive oil may be purchased from any retailer and you can purchase a dropper from any chemist. We do **NOT** recommend specially formulated preparations that can be purchased which are not olive oil. This is because they can irritate healthy ears.

If you are deaf and you **don't know** why, you should see a doctor or a nurse, especially if you are in pain. If they find it is wax causing it, they will advise the olive oil treatment for a minimum of 1 week.

Do not use cotton wool to keep oil in the ear as it absorbs the oil preventing it from softening wax and never use cotton buds to clean your ears.

We still occasionally undertake syringing for medical reasons. This has to be decided by a nurse, who will ensure that the risks are explained. Only if the patient agrees to accept these risks, will they then syringe it. Microsuction of the ear cavity is an alternative method of removing wax but can only be provided in an ENT department at a hospital.

If you have a build up of wax repeatedly, you can keep the ears free by putting olive oil in the ear twice a week.

Ear syringing is not recommended a week before flying.

**If you have, or suspect you have, any kind of ear problem other than wax you should NOT put anything down the ear except after medical advice.**



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