



EAR WAX TREATMENT



(WHY WE NO LONGER ROUTINELY SYRINGE EARS)

EAR SYRINGING AS A METHOD OF REMOVING WAX IS KNOWN TO BE HAZARDOUS

SAFE PRACTICE

If you know you have an ear wax problem causing deafness and that your ear is otherwise healthy you can start the ear drop treatment for yourself.

- ▶ *Place 2-3 drops of ordinary olive oil down the ear 2 or 3 times a day for 3 weeks*
- ▶ *Do not place cotton wool in the ear as it only soaks up the oil*
- ▶ *The olive oil softens the wax which will run out of its own accord*
- ▶ *You may not necessarily see wax come out as it usually comes out unnoticed*
- ▶ *If, after 3 weeks, you are still deaf make an appointment with our nurse to decide next steps*

If your hearing is impaired and you don't know why, you should initially see our nurse. If we find it is wax causing it, we will advise the the above 3-week treatment regime.

BUT I NORMALLY GET MY EARS SYRINGED...

If you have been having your ear syringed regularly, you may be disappointed by this regime. However ear syringing is known to lead to ear infections, perforated ear drum and tinnitus (persistent noise). We feel sure that you will agree that we must provide effective and safe treatment.

We occasionally have to undertake ear irrigation for medical reasons. This will be decided by our nurse who will ensure that the risks are explained. Only if you agree and consent to accept these risks, will we consider syringing.

PREVENTION

Ear wax has a protective function and normally moves out automatically from inside the ear canal to the outside without the need to remove it yourself.

If you have a build up of wax repeatedly, you can keep it free by putting olive oil down twice a week. Alternative softeners for treatment or prevention includes sodium bicarbonate 5% ear drops and these can be obtained cheaply from your pharmacist.

CAUTION

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.

EAR IRRIGATION PRACTICE PROTOCOL

NAME

EMIS NO:

DOB

HISTORY

- ☐ Undergone 3 weeks of ear drops
- ☐ No ear pain in the last 6 weeks
- ☐ No current URTI
- ☐ No unusual ear discharge
- ☐ No history of perforation, ear surgery, cleft palate
- ☐ No recent head injury
- ☐ Where there is hearing in one ear only do not irrigate that ear
- ☐ No previous complications with irrigation

EXAMINATION

- ☐ There is enough obstructive wax present for syringing (if eardrum is visible irrigation is not required)
- ☐ Patient well enough to undergo procedure
- ☐ No evidence of infection (pain, swelling, discharge, blood)
- ☐ No evidence of surgery
- ☐ No perforation seen
- ☐ No foreign body seen
- ☐ No dermatitis/psoriasis/eczema in canals

CONSENT

The nurse has:

- ▶ asked me the above questions related to the ear irrigation procedure
- ▶ explained the proposed treatment
- ▶ given me written information about ear care, including drops and irrigation

I understand that the risks of ear irrigation includes

- ▶ failure to remove ear wax
- ▶ pain/discomfort, dizziness/vertigo, nausea/vomiting
- ▶ perforation of the ear drum, ear infection and worsening of pre-existing tinnitus.

I have received and read a copy of 'Ear Syringing Patient Leaflet' and understand and accept the risks associated with ear syringing. I agree that I do not have any of the conditions as detailed in the leaflet that may prevent me from undergoing ear irrigation.

I agree to having the ear irrigation performed on me.

Signature

DATE

NOTES FOR NURSE

Discuss with the GP

- where a valid consent cannot be given or where a risk assessment cannot be completed
- where the risk assessment has identified a problem requiring treatment or referral



BEFORE SYRINGING

Ear wax is a normal body secretion; it provides protection against infection and dust particles. The ear is self cleaning, and the wax works its way out naturally. **Never use cotton wool buds to clean inside your ears**, as they irritate the delicate skin inside the ear canal, they will also push the wax back into the ear and compact it.

Ear syringing is not without risk. This includes

- ▶ failure to remove the ear wax
- ▶ pain/discomfort, dizziness/vertigo, nausea/vomiting
- ▶ perforation of the ear drum, ear infection
- ▶ worsening of pre-existing tinnitus (ringing in the ears)

To minimise the risk of harm, the wax should be softened with softening ear drops for at least 3 weeks before syringing.

Syringing will only be carried out if the ear is completely blocked with ear wax despite a 3 week regime (see below) of wax-softening ear drops. Very rarely, the drops may cause discomfort, burning, itching. If this happens, stop using the drops and seek advice.

THE WAX SOFTENING DROPS TREATMENT

- ▶ *Place 2-3 drops of ordinary olive oil down the ear 2 or 3 times a day for 3 weeks*
- ▶ *Do not place cotton wool in the ear as it only soaks up the oil*
- ▶ *The olive oil softens the wax which will run out of its own accord*
- ▶ *You may not necessarily see wax come out as it often comes out unnoticed*
- ▶ *If, after 3 weeks, you are still deaf, please come and see our nurse for a check up*

YOUR SAFETY CHECKLIST

YOUR CHECKLIST BEFORE THE SYRINGING

Have you undergone 3 weeks of wax softening ear drops?	Yes / No
Have you had any ear pain in the last 6 weeks?	Yes / No
Are you presently suffering from a 'cold'?	Yes / No
Do you have any ear discharge?	Yes / No
Have you a history of ear perforation, or ear surgery?	Yes / No
Have you had problems with previous syringing?	Yes / No

If you are unsure whether you wish to proceed with ear syringing or are concerned about the risks please discuss this with the nurse at your appointment prior to giving your consent.

DURING SYRINGING

It can be uncomfortable to have your ears syringed but it should not be painful.

During the procedure, please report the following immediately:

- ▶ any ear pain or dizziness
- ▶ if the water is too hot or cold
- ▶ if you want the nurse to stop

AFTER SYRINGING

After you have had your ears syringed, keep them dry for a few days, as the protective wax layer has been removed. If you have continuing problems with ear wax, it may help putting in a few drops of olive oil once a week, to keep the wax soft and aid its natural movement out.