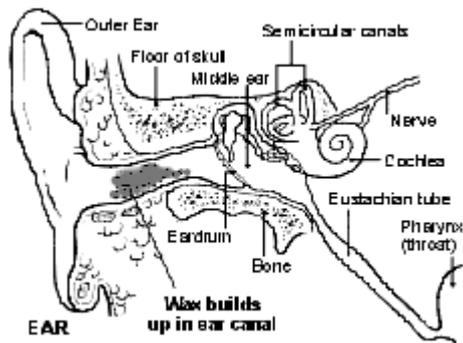


# Ear Syringing/Ear Care

If there is a build up 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

## 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 at Wellspring Surgery:

- 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 to 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 practice nurse for further advice and management.

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**Alternatively**, there are now over-the-counter kits available from pharmacies. These contain a wax softener which you use for 3-4 days and a small bulb syringe to enable you to remove the wax from your ear canals yourself. One such kit is called Otex Express Combi Pack (costs approx £7.95). We do not advise you use this type of preparation to soften wax before having your ears syringed as longer term use can cause irritation and soreness to your ears.

**Ear Syringing** – is only usually considered if the above recommendations have proved to be unsuccessful. Ear wax needs to be softened as above for 10 to 14 days before attempting to syringe. Although the risks are low and our nurses are specially trained to perform this procedure, there is still a small chance (thought to be around 1 in 1000) of complications occurring – such as a perforated ear drum, middle ear infection, external canal infection or causing ringing in the ear (tinnitus).

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 twice per week on night time to keep the wax soft and encourage the natural process of wax expulsion.