

## Earwax and ear irrigation

Earwax is produced inside your ears to keep them clean and free from germs. It usually passes out harmlessly but sometime ear wax builds up and becomes impacted or hardened.

Symptoms of earwax build-up include:

- hearing loss
- earache or a feeling that your ears are blocked
- itchiness in or around the ear
- ringing or buzzing in your ears (tinnitus)
- vertigo (feeling dizzy and sick)
- ear infections.

If you think you have a build-up of ear wax, please DO NOT try to clean your ears with cotton wool buds. This can make things worse as you may push the wax deeper inside. It may also cause an ear infection.

Ear irrigation or ear syringing is a quick and painless procedure where an electric pump is used to push water into your ear and wash the earwax out.

If you are booked for an ear irrigation appointment, it is essential that you prepare your ears well beforehand. You WILL NOT be able to have the procedure performed if, when arriving for your appointment, you have not followed all of the steps below to prepare.

### Steps you should take to help you prepare for your ear appointment

1. You should oil your affected ears with liquid olive oil in order to soften the wax for easy removal. Please do not use spray oil as this does not usually soften the wax enough for it to be removed.
2. For your ear irrigation to be successful, you should oil your ears for 2-3 times a day for **10 consecutive** days prior to your appointment.
3. Process for oiling your ears:
  - You must oil your ears two or three times a day
  - Lie on your side with the affected ear facing up. Use half a teaspoon or a dropper to drop the oil into your ear. Gently push and pull the outer ear to allow the drops to work in.
  - Remain lying down for about 10 minutes to let the oil soak into the ear wax. After 10 minutes the oil in your ear canal will have done its job, so you can wipe away any residual oil with a tissue.
  - Repeat same steps for your other ear, if also affected.
4. Do not use cotton wool or cotton buds in your ear canal as the cotton absorbs the oil and can impact its effectiveness.
5. Patients should be aware that if they have not taken the above steps regularly and their ear wax is still hard, the nurse will be unable to attempt to remove it.
6. Do not forget to use the oil – taking the above steps on the morning of your ear appointment.