



How to remedy ear wax problems and avoid unnecessary syringing

Patient Information



Market Harborough Medical Centre
67 Coventry
Market Harborough
LE16 9BX

01858 464242

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YOUR EARS

The ear canal is a 3cm tunnel ending at the eardrum. The sides of the tunnel are covered with skin and have small glands which produce wax. The wax is important to waterproof and protect the skin of the tunnel. Usually, ears are self cleaning and the excess wax works itself out.

Occasionally, a large build up of wax can cause deafness and then you may need to use ear drops to clear it. Only VERY RARELY should syringing be needed. Even if syringing is carried out carefully by trained staff, as here in the Medical Centre, it can cause COMPLICATIONS such as ear infections, perforated ear drums, tinnitus, vertigo and deafness, so we only use it as an absolute last resort.

Instead we recommend that you use eardrops 3 times/day for AT LEAST 3 weeks. This will clear most wax build up. Please do not use cotton-buds or ear candles - these can do real damage to the ear canal and drum. Once the ears are clear of wax, it can be helpful to continue to use the drops twice/week to help keep them clear.

If you are deaf and you don't know why, or if you have other ear symptoms eg unpleasant discharge/pain, or you have been told you have already got a perforated ear drum, then you should see a GP or nurse. In these cases please do not put anything in your ears until they have been checked.



HOW TO USE EAR DROPS

- (1) Use olive oil or sodium bicarbonate ear drops(available from a pharmacy). Have the drops at room temperature for use.
- (2) Lie on your side with the affected ear uppermost and put 3-5 drops into the ear canal. Let the drops soak in for at least 5 minutes.
- (3) You can use some cotton wool (dampened with water or Vaseline)placed at the entrance to the canal to stop drips running out as you get up afterwards.
- (4) Repeat for other ear if necessary.

This method is EFFECTIVE and SAFE. Help us to help you avoid syringing.