

7. Ear Irrigation Advice leaflet

The aim of this leaflet is to reduce requests for unnecessary ear irrigations. Ear irrigation is not without risk so any procedure that reduces the number of instances is obviously beneficial.

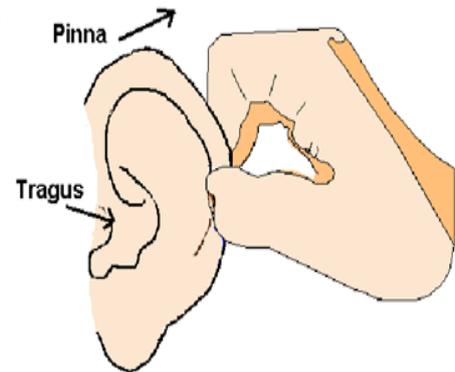
What to do BEFORE asking for an appointment

An appointment to see a nurse for "ear syringing" cannot be undertaken without initial pre-treatment.

The pre-treatment requires the application of olive oil into the ear(s) daily for two weeks. Please follow the instructions here to encourage normal expulsion of wax from the outer ear.

Installation of ear drops

- You are recommended to buy a 'dropper' bottle of olive oil from your pharmacist.
- Applying drops 2 or 3 times daily for 2 weeks prior to a consultation for wax removal is an essential part of the treatment – and for many patients this action will resolve the problem without the need for irrigation.
- If you are troubled with repeated accumulation of ear wax your nurse or doctor may recommend using olive oil once every week as a preventative treatment.
- Lie down on your side with the affected ear uppermost
- Use the olive oil in very small amounts – and stop using if you experience any pain or discomfort
- Pull the pinna (outer ear) backwards and upwards (see diagram). Drop 1-2 drops of olive oil, at room temperature, into the ear canal and massage the tragus just in front of the ear
- Remain lying down for 5 minutes and then wipe away any excess oil
- Repeat the procedure with the opposite ear if necessary



Ear wax treatment

- A small amount of wax is normal in the ear canal. It is only when there is an accumulation of wax that removal may be necessary. Correctly applying olive oil to the ear can facilitate expulsion of the wax and, in the vast majority of cases, this treatment can avoid the need for unnecessary ear syringing.
- Using olive oil drops as directed does not harm the ear and you can continue application for any length of time – although 2 weeks is often enough.
- Be aware that you may not see the wax coming out – it often comes out unnoticed - but you are likely to find your discomfort and/or hearing loss disappears.
- If, however, after 2 weeks you are still deaf from wax, make an appointment with the practice nurse to consider irrigation of the ear.
- If you are deaf and you don't know why then you should ask for a Doctor's appointment. If the Doctor finds that wax is causing the deafness, we will not undertake irrigation of the ear until you have commenced the olive oil treatment as described.
- If the nurse detects an infection or problem you may be referred to one of the doctors.
- If we do need to undertake ear irrigation, we will ensure the risks are explained to you.
- Irrigation of the ear can, amongst other things, lead to a higher risk of ear infections, damage to the tympanic membrane, perforated eardrum, tinnitus (persistent noise).