



LONG STRATTON MEDICAL PARTNERSHIP

Managing Ear Wax

The ear is a very delicate, fragile and extremely clever instrument allowing us to hear sounds and to balance. It is easily damaged so we should learn to look after our ears to our best ability.

Ear Wax

We all produce ear wax. The reason for this is that ear wax forms a coating of the skin in the ear canal, acting as a protective layer, which traps dust and other particles which get into the ear. Small amounts are made all the time, and it slowly works its way to the outside, taking the trapped dirt and dust with it, at a rate which means that it does not build up. For some people however, ear wax can build up, sometimes it is pushed further into the ear canal, for example, by a cotton bud, hearing aid or ear phones. If this happens, the wax becomes hard and impacted and may stop you hearing properly.

Recommended Treatment

Ear nose and throat specialists have advised us on the best, most effective and safest treatment for ear wax that is causing deafness, and it is our intention to follow their recommendations. This method works for most people.

Ear Drops

We recommend olive oil as the most suitable oil. We don't recommend specially formulated preparations that can be purchased which are not olive oil. This is because they can sometimes irritate healthy ears. If you have or suspect you have an ear problem you should not put anything down the ear.

You are required to put 2 or 3 drops of ordinary olive oil down the ear 2 or 3 times a day for 3 – 4 weeks.

Apply as follows:

1. Tip your head to one side or lie on your side so that the affected ear is facing upwards. Gently pull the outer ear backwards and upwards.
2. Using room temperature olive oil and a dropper, drop 2 or 3 drops into the ear canal. Then gently massage the area in front of your ear.
3. Remain lying on your side, or keep head tipped for 5-10 minutes; then wipe away any excess oil.



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4. Instilling eardrops can initially cause transient hearing loss and irritation.
5. Repeat full procedure on the other ear if needed.

You can continue with drops for any length of time, but 4 weeks is usually enough. If after 4 weeks you are still deaf from wax, or feel that the problem has not resolved, make an appointment with your Practice Nurse, to decide what should be done. We are no longer offering **ear syringing** as a routine treatment for ear wax, as there is increasing evidence that it is not as safe as previously thought and can cause inflamed and irritated ear canals.

Deafness

If you think you are deaf because of wax, or if you are deaf and you don't know why, you should see a nurse or doctor to have the ear checked. If we find it is caused by wax, we will advise the olive oil treatment.

If you know you have a wax problem causing deafness and that your ear is healthy you can try this treatment for yourself.

Further Treatment

If the oil treatment does not work please see your Practice Nurse or Doctor, who will decide on the next course of action. We will not consider further treatment options until we are satisfied that the olive oil treatment has been properly and conscientiously carried out for at least 4 weeks.

Ongoing Management

To prevent further build-up of wax, you can continue to put olive oil into the ear twice a week. An alternative approved softener for treatment or prevention is sodium bicarbonate 5% ear drops. These can be obtained from a chemist.

Wax normally comes out of the ear with the skin of the ear canal which grows from deep inside & moves to the outside over about 2 weeks.

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.