

Ear Wax (adults)

Wax is a normal body secretion which provides a protective coating on the skin of the ear canal. It is only removed if causing a problem, i.e. impacted, and painful, or if the eardrum needs to be seen for a very good reason. Earwax often blocks hearing aid moulds causing unnecessary difficulties to those whose hearing is already compromised.

Removing plugs of ear wax

(1) Use of Olive oil or Almond oil (NOT SUIT ABLE FOR PATIENTS WITH NUT ALLERGIES) eardrops

The person should lie on one side with the affected ear uppermost. Drop four or five drops of olive oil into the ear. The person should remain lying on his/her side for 10 minutes. The drops should be used twice daily for a minimum of ten days.

Seek medical advice prior to using drops if there is a known or suspected perforated ear drum, or if grommets have been inserted.

(2) Ear syringing

Syringing is usually successful only if the wax plug has been softened. Therefore olive oil drops need to be put in 2 times a day for 10 days prior to syringing. Ear syringing is best avoided in people with the following:

- Previous surgery for some ear problems.
- Recurring ear canal infections (otitis externa).
- A perforated ear drum.

What not to do

Do not try to clean the ear canal with cotton buds etc. This often has the opposite effect and wax is pushed deeper inside. It may also cause an ear infection. Let the ear 'clean itself'.

Preventing a build up of ear wax

Some people are prone to developing wax plugs. A build up of ear wax may be prevented by putting some olive oil drops in each ear twice a week.