

## Self-Care Management of Impacted Ear Wax

The amount of ear wax produced varies from person to person. You are more likely to develop a blockage of wax in the ear canal if you:

- use cotton ear buds to clean the ear- wax is pushed deeper into the canal
- wear a hearing aid, ear plugs or use in-ear speakers- these can all interfere with the natural process of wax expulsion
- are elderly – because the ear wax you produce is drier and harder
- have a dry skin problem such as eczema or psoriasis

Ear wax only becomes a problem if it causes deafness, discomfort or if your Health professional requires a clear view of your ear drum.

**Please seek advice from your GP or nurse, and do not attempt to self-treat if any of the following apply to you:**

- Pain, sudden deafness or buzzing in the ear
- A history of ear drum perforation or previous surgery in the affected ear
- Symptoms of infection in the ear – usually pain or a smelly discharge
- foreign body in the ear

We recommend the following ear drop regime, and if you remain symptomatic you may also wish to consider using an ear bulb syringe which can be bought at a pharmacy. If these measures fail please make an appointment with your nurse for further advice and management. You may require an ENT referral for microsuction.

### **Olive Oil Drops –**

The following needs to be done 2-3 times daily for 14 days.

- Lie on your side with the affected ear uppermost
- Pull the outer ear gently backwards and upwards to straighten the ear canal
- Put 2-3 drops of olive oil into the affected ear and gently massage just in front of the ear
- Stay laying on your side to allow the wax to soak in for around 10 mins
- Afterwards, wipe away any excess oil

Your hearing problem may initially worsen after first starting to use the olive oil drops; this is why we advise you to concentrate on treating one ear at a time.

In most cases, after 14 days, the wax will have softened sufficiently to encourage the wax to come out without further intervention.

If your ears are regularly becoming blocked with wax, after clearing the blockage we will usually suggest you use olive oil drops as above around once per week to keep the wax soft and encourage the natural process of wax expulsion.

Unfortunately the NHS does not fund ear syringing so we are no longer able to undertake this work. Ear syringing is also one of the most common areas for litigation involving practice nurses.