

GRAND DRIVE SURGERY

EAR Wax Removal Guidance for Patients

Ear wax is a natural build up dead cells, hair, foreign material such as dust, and cerumen. Normally ear wax causes no or minimal symptoms but occasionally it can cause symptoms such as dulled hearing, earache or vertigo. If this occurs please do see your pharmacist who can recommend ear wax drops.

We recommend use of an oil based drop (eg olive or almond) initially to soften wax which will enable it to fall out on its own or dissolve. **Please try this for a minimum of 2 weeks.**

If you feel this has not happened: please then try sodium bicarbonate drops for a minimum of 3-5 days.

Warm the drops to room temperature before using them. (Let the bottle stand in the room for about half an hour.) Pour a few drops into the affected ear. Lie with the affected ear uppermost when putting in drops. Stay like this for 2-3 minutes to allow the drops to soak into the earwax. The earwax is softened and it often breaks up if you put drops in 2-3 times a day for 3-7 days. Flakes or crusts of earwax often fall out bit by bit. You may not notice the wax as it comes out of your ear.

You can also consider the use of an ear bulb as a safe, alternate way for to self-manage the removal of ear wax. Bulb syringes can be purchased from a pharmacy

Unfortunately we are now not able to offer ear irrigation to patients routinely. However, please do feel free to book an appointment with a practice nurse or clinician to discuss any concerns if you feel your symptoms are not due to earwax, or if you have been advised to see a clinician in preparation for an audiology appointment.

If you wish to be seen privately for ear irrigation or microsuction, the following local clinics where this can be done are listed below, **we recommend microsuction** (see overleaf for the reason for this):

Specsavers 56-58 Clarence Street, Kingston-upon-Thames KT1 1NP 020 8974 6677
(microsuction) <https://www.specsavers.co.uk/hearing/ear-health/earwax>

Hearology various locations Central London (microsuction)

<https://hearology.uk/ear-wax-removal>

The GP Surgery 6-10 St Georges Road, Wimbledon SW19 4DP 020 3772 5440 (irrigation)

<https://www.thegpsurgery.co.uk/our-services/ear-wax-syringing/>

Further Information on methods for removing ear wax:

Generally Microsuction is now preferred to Ear Syringing/Irrigation for the following reasons:

Syringing and ear irrigation aim to remove wax blockages by squirting water into the ear canal and behind the blockage, in the hope that the water will build up enough pressure behind the blockage to push the wax out.

It's a slightly counter-intuitive process because to get the wax out; you have to push water in, and this has many risks, including the risk of pushing the wax further into the ear canal. As the nurse cannot accurately see deep inside the canal, it is also not possible to perform an ear examination behind the blockage first. If water is squirted into an already-perforated eardrum or a middle-ear infection, there is a risk of re-perforation.

When an irrigation procedure goes wrong, some of the potential side effects are:

Pain

Dizziness

Bruising or bleeding of the ear canal

Outer Ear Infection

Ear drum perforation

Middle Ear Infection

Tinnitus

Hearing Loss

Facial Nerve Damage

Considering these risks and the safer alternative options available, performing ear syringing and irrigation is discouraged by the National Institute for Health and Care and instead, people are encouraged to seek out safer methods, like microsuction.

Microsuction uses very gentle medical suction to remove ear wax with pinpoint accuracy, rather than having to push anything into the ear canal. Due to the binocular microscope, practitioners have a really clear view of the ear canal and will quickly become aware of any infections or perforations. Even with an existing perforation, microsuction is a safe way to remove ear wax without the risk of pushing it further in the ear.