

The aim of this leaflet is to give you advice about:

- Ear wax
- What can you do if wax builds up and causes problems?
- Ear drops and how to get them into your ear
- Removal of ear wax by microsuction
- General advice about looking after your ears
- Who to contact for Appointment

Ear wax is produced inside your ears to keep them clean and free from germs. It usually passes out of the ears harmlessly, but sometimes too much can build up and block the ears. A build-up of earwax is a common problem that can often be treated using eardrops bought from a pharmacy.

What causes earwax to build up?

Some people regularly get blocked ears because they naturally produce a lot of earwax.

Other factors that can increase the risk of too much wax include:

- Producing naturally hard or dry earwax
- Having narrow or hairy ear canals (the tube between the opening of the ear and the eardrum)
- Being elderly, as earwax becomes drier with age.
- Bony growths in the outer part of the ear canal
- Earwax can also block your ear if you frequently insert objects into your ear canal, such as cotton buds, ear plugs or hearing aids.

Symptoms of ear wax buildup

A buildup of earwax in your ear can cause:

- Earache
- Hearing loss
- Tinnitus (hearing sounds from inside your body)
- Itchiness in or round the ear
- Vertigo
- Ear infections

These problems will usually improve once the excess earwax has been removed.

Ear Drops alone will often clear a plug of wax. You can buy these drops from pharmacies. For example, sodium bicarbonate, almond oil or olive oil ear drops, all three work as well as each other.



Do not use drops if you have a perforated eardrum (hole in your eardrum)

How to get eardrops into your ear

1. Wash your hands
2. Clean and dry the affected outer ear (gently use a tissue to clean the outer ear)
3. Wash your hands again
4. Warm the drops to body temperature before using them. Put them in your pocket or hold them in your hand for five minutes before using them.
5. Lie on your back

6. Tilt your head so that the affected ear is turned upwards for applying drops
7. If possible have a second person put the prescribed number of drops into the ear canal (see below)
8. Apply gentle on and off pressure with your finger to the cartilage at the front of the ear opening for 3 or 4 times. (See diagram).



9. Lie with the affected ear uppermost for 5 minutes, to allow the drops to soak in. The drops soften the wax and it often breaks up and comes out on its own. 3 – 4 drops of chosen drops can be used twice daily for one week.

Information about eardrops

- Keep eardrops in a cool dark place.
- Do not let anyone else use your eardrops or do not use anyone else's eardrops.
- Throw out the bottle (and get a new one if required) after the recommended time (this is usually 4 weeks after opening the bottle). You can write the date you opened the bottle on the label so that you know when to throw it out.
- Stop using eardrops if you feel pain, dizziness, hearing loss or irritation.

Once you have applied the drops for one week:

If your symptoms continue:

- Phone the number overleaf
- There is no need to contact your GP or Practice Nurse
- You will be offered the next available appointment at a time and venue that is acceptable to you
- You will be seen in an Aural Care Clinic (locations of the clinics are listed overleaf)
- A Specialist Aural Care Nurse will look inside your ears to check if they are blocked
- They may suggest using eardrops for a bit longer or they will carry out microsuction

Ear microsuction

The term microsuction is used to describe a procedure carried out by a Specialist Nurse to remove wax, dead skin, foreign objects and even infection from your ears. We use a specialist microscope to look in your ears and a very small suction tube to remove the debris.

Who can have microsuction?

Anyone can have microsuction, as long as they are able to remain still throughout the procedure.

What will it feel like?

It may be noisy and you may feel some strange sensations. There might be some slight discomfort but if it is painful tell the nurse who will stop immediately. If you have any concerns or worries, just speak to our nurses who will be happy to allay your fears.

After the procedure

If you have tinnitus, this may be aggravated for a day or two and you may feel dizzy. Occasionally there may be a small amount of bleeding.

If you have any concerns afterwards speak to the specialist nurse.

General advice about looking after your ears

Do not use cotton buds or any other object to clean your ears. This will push the wax or dirt further into the ear, or scratch or damage the ear canal. The ear cleans itself and flakes of wax will fall out now and then.



Do not use corners of towels or cotton buds to dry your ear canal. They will dry naturally.

To book an appointment:

Kings Cross Hospital
Telephone: 01382 596965

Aural Care Clinics are held in the following areas:

Abbey Health Centre, Arbroath

Outpatient Department, Arbroath Infirmary

Carnoustie Medical Group

Outpatient Department, Links Health Centre

Monifieth Medical Practice

Outpatient Department, Stracathro Hospital

Outpatient Department, Whitehills Health and Community Care Centre