

Patient Information Leaflet for Ear Care

Corner Place Surgery no longer offers *routine* ear irrigation (syringing). Our ear irrigation service is always undertaken by trained staff, but this can occasionally result in inflamed or infected ear canals. We understand that irrigation should rarely be necessary. The most effective way to manage ear canal blockage due to wax or debris is the application of ear drops and/or olive oil, which should disperse excessive wax, and regular application will prevent the build-up of wax. Brand names you may have heard of include Earex, Earol, Cerumol and Otex (there are others). These are available from your local pharmacy or large supermarket. Please note: these are not available on prescription.

Wax is normal – it protects and lubricates the Ear Canal. It is a mixture of Cerumen (a sweat-like substance) and Sebum (an oily substance), both secreted by glands in your Ear Canal, which then combines with dust, debris, hair etc. to form ear wax. It is normal to have ear wax, and it usually only becomes a problem when it has been pushed deeper into the Ear Canal.

Your ears are self-cleaning – if you use cotton wool buds or similar objects, to try to remove the wax, it will only be pushed further into the ear canal and become impacted and block your ear.

Routine Care of Your Ears.

- In most cases ear drops used for an extended period of time will disperse the build-up of wax.
- The drops should be at room temperature before use.
- Lie on your side with the affected ear uppermost and place three to five drops into the ear canal. Let the drops soak in for at least 5 minutes, the longer the better.
- Repeat twice daily, three times if possible, to the affected ear until the wax has gone and your hearing improves.
- Drops should be used at least twice daily, three times if possible, for at least 2 weeks and should result in your hearing improving. (if using olive oil you can continue for a further 1 – 2 weeks for maximum effect)
- Cotton-buds or ear candles should not be used as these can cause real damage to the ear canal and drum.
- If you have repeated problems with wax blocking your ears, using olive oil ear drops – 2 drops once a week can help prevent this.
- If you have ear problems such as dry skin, eczema, dermatitis, ‘runny ears’, you will find keeping your ears DRY will improve the condition. Avoid shampoo, shower gel and hairspray etc. in your ears.
- The easiest way to keep your ears dry when bathing or showering is by using ear plugs or a large piece of cotton-wool smeared with Vaseline/Petroleum jelly.

NOTE: Sodium bicarbonate drops are better for dissolving stubbornly hard wax but should not be used for more than 5 days as it may result in irritation to the skin. If you still feel that you have wax after 1 week of using sodium bicarbonate, then you may continue using a further 3 weeks of olive oil drops.

If, after 4 weeks of using the oil as directed, you still feel you have blocked ears then please call the surgery. If at any time you are experiencing pain, worsening deafness or an unpleasant smelling discharge you should stop using the drops and consult a doctor or nurse at the surgery.