



## Earwax

Ear wax is normal and is produced to form a protective coating over the skin in the ear canal. It helps to keep your ears healthy; it is anti-fungal and antibacterial.

Ears are normally self-cleaning, the movement of your jaw whilst eating and talking helps to move the wax along the canal where it will usually fall out naturally without you noticing. You do not need to wash, scrape or poke wax out of your ears. Your external ear canal keeps itself clean using a natural process.

### What causes a build-up of ear wax?

Some people regularly get blocked ears because they naturally produce a lot of earwax. Other factors which can increase the risk of too much earwax 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.

**If wax is not causing any problems, it is best left alone.**

### Managing your condition/ how do I treat?

In the first instance we recommend you manage the blockage as follows:

- 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
- After 10 minutes, wipe away any excess oil **but do not plug your ear with cotton wool** as this simply absorbs the oil.
- Concentrate on treating one ear at a time if both ears are blocked with wax as your hearing may initially worsen after first starting to use the olive oil drops.

Do this 2-3 times a day for 14 days. In most cases, after 14 days, the wax will have softened sufficiently to encourage the wax to come out without further intervention.

If you feel your hearing is still impaired, please make an appointment with the GP for further advice and management.

**Speak to your pharmacist** - if you're not sure and would like to speak with someone speak with your pharmacy, they will be able to advice & support you

### When should I seek advice?

If you experience any of the following, then seek advice from your GP:

- pain
- discharge or bleeding from the ear
- sudden deafness or buzzing
- foreign bodies in the ear
- dizziness

### More information is available at the following websites

- NHS Choices - [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)
- Stay Well Derbyshire – [www.nhsstaywelderbyshire.co.uk](http://www.nhsstaywelderbyshire.co.uk)
- Or visit your local pharmacy for advice