

Gloucester Road Medical Centre

Patient Information Leaflet for Ear Care

Gloucester Road Medical Centre no longer offers routine ear irrigation (syringing). Although our ear irrigation service is always undertaken by trained staff, this can occasionally result in inflamed and 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 buildup 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), Sebum (an oily substance) both secreted by glands in your Ear Canal, which 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 buildup 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.
- Repeat three times a day to the affected ear until the wax has gone and your hearing improves.
- Drops should be used three times a day 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 do 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 may 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 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 a few days to 1 week 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** you still feel you have blocked ears then please call the surgery to request a call back from one of the nurses.

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.

Ear irrigation services

Sr Emma Andrews RN - offers a private Ear Irrigation (syringing) service in your own home at a charge of £45.

Tel: 0117 9090307 for an appointment

Microsuction services

Microsuction is an alternative method of earwax removal - it is undertaken using a microscope and a medical suction device, hence the term microsuction.

Microsuction is a safe and a more comfortable method of earwax removal as no liquids are used during the procedure.

This is a **private service** and is available at the following places locally:

Westbury-on-Trym Primary Care Centre - **0117 962 3406**

Clifton Audiology - **0117 901 2526**

The cost is usually £40 for one ear and £60 for both. This is a guide only and we advise that you check this with the provider first. This is not an exclusive list of providers in Bristol and you may find alternatives if you search 'microsuction' on the internet.