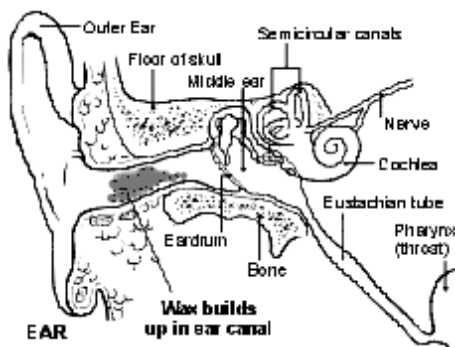




## EAR CARE ADVICE FOR PATIENTS

### What is earwax?



Earwax is normal and is produced to form a protective coating over the skin in the ear canal. 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.

**Why is my ear blocked with wax?** - The amount of earwax produced varies from person to person; some people produce more wax than others do which can lead to a blockage in the ear canal.

You are more likely to develop a blockage of wax in the canal if you:

- use cotton ear buds to clean the ear as this pushes the wax deeper into the canal
- wear a hearing aid, ear plugs or use in-ear speakers for i-pods or similar - as these can all interfere with the natural process of wax expulsion
- have abnormally narrow ear canals
- have particularly hairy ear canals
- are elderly – because the ear wax you produce is drier and harder
- have a dry skin problem such as eczema or psoriasis

**Preventing earwax build-up** - You cannot prevent earwax. It is there to protect your ears from dirt and germs. However, you can keep using eardrops to soften the wax. This will help it fall out on its own and should prevent blocked ears.

**Ear Irrigation/Syringing** –the Practice does not provide an ear syringing service. This is a non-essential and un-funded service for Practices to provide. The Practice has decided that although the risks are low, there is still a small chance of complications occurring. These include perforated eardrum, middle ear infection, external canal infection or tinnitus (ringing in the ear).

**Ear Care Options** - Earwax only becomes a problem if it causes deafness, discomfort or if your health professional requires a clear view of your eardrum. Your options are therefore



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- **Self Help**

**Olive Oil Drops** – The following needs to be done 2 - 3 times daily for 14 days.

- 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(s) and gently massage just in front of the ear
- Stay laying on your side to allow the oil to soak in for at least 10 minutes
- Afterwards, wipe away any excess oil but do not plug your ear with cotton wool as this simply absorbs the oil

Your hearing problem may initially worsen after first starting to use the olive oil drops; this is why we advise you to concentrate on treating one ear at a time if both ears are blocked with wax.

In most cases, after 14 days, the wax will have softened sufficiently to encourage the wax to come out without further intervention.

- **Visit your local Pharmacist who can help with earwax build-up**

- Speak to a pharmacist about earwax build-up. They can give advice and suggest treatments
- They might recommend chemical drops to dissolve the earwax. The earwax should fall out on its own or dissolve after about a week.
- Do not use drops if you have a hole in your eardrum (a perforated eardrum).

**When to seek advice** - If you experience any of the following, you should seek advice from Western Vale Family Practice:

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

- **Referral to ENT**

Having undertaken the above self-help, a GP or the Nurse Practitioner may think it appropriate to refer you to the NHS Audiology service, however there is unfortunately a long waiting list.

- **Pay privately for microsuction.**

During microsuction your healthcare professional will use a microscope to examine your ear canal. They will insert a tiny suction tube (called a cannula) into the canal and suction any blockage from the area. Sometimes manual tools may be required to break up the wax to assist removal, and if the wax is very sloppy and wet, irrigation



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(using a very gentle and controlled flow of body temperature water) may be used.  
These treatments are usually painless.

**Local Private Microsuction Services:**

**Cardiff Hearing (Clinics in CB on regular basis).**

**To book, you can do so online via their website or by calling 029 015 0022**

**<https://www.cardiffhearing.co.uk/>**

**Price £69 regardless of whether they are treating 1 or 2 ears.**

**Should no wax be present, Cardiff Hearing will advise the most appropriate next steps to help you further.**