

**Patient information leaflet**

**Wax removal/ear syringing for blocked ears**

The practice only offers wax removal/ ear syringing to patients as part of a referral for a hearing test.

**When is it necessary to remove ear-wax?**

Ears are designed to clean themselves, and regular cleaning isn’t necessary. Sometimes you may find your ear is blocked with wax and you can’t hear, and if this is a problem removing the wax may help.

**Can I remove ear wax myself?**

Yes, with a bulb syringe, instructions below unless you have a hole in your ear drum (perforation) or your ears are painful or have fluid coming out of them, in which case you should see a doctor and don’t use this method.

**Is it safe?**

Yes, as far as we know. In the USA and in Europe ear-wax is commonly self-treated with a bulb syringe and 2 recent research studies have concluded that self-treatment is both safe and effective.

**Does it work?**

Yes, in about half the people who use it. Although syringing by a nurse is a bit more effective, this treatment may be more convenient for you and it might be worth trying first.

**Is it expensive?**

The syringe, shown below, costs about £3.50 and is sold in pharmacies. The pharmacist may need to order it in. Sodium bicarbonate ear drops cost around £3 per bottle.



**Who should NOT use this method?**

People who have a hole in their ear drum (perforation) should not use this method.

If you have a new or unknown cause of hearing reduction or your ears .

are painful or have fluid coming out of them you should see a doctor and don’t use this method

**Cont….**

**How do I do it?**

1. Soften the wax in your ears for 4-5 days beforehand, using 2 drops of sodium bicarbonate solution (available from a pharmacy) at night.

2. Use a bowl of warm water of comfortable temperature, not too hot or too cold.

3. Prepare the syringe by squirting water in and out of it a few times.

4. Gently pull your outer ear "up and out" to help straighten out the canal, which will allow better access for the water.

5. Tilt your head to one side and gently squirt one or more bulb syringes of water into your ear. (This might be best done in the shower so that the excess water will run into the bathtub and not on your floor!)

6. Allow the water to remain in your ear for at least 60 seconds. Gently tilt your head in the opposite direction and wiggle your outer ear. You may note the water which comes out is now discoloured or has chunks of ear wax in it. This is a good thing.

7. Repeat if needed.

8. Repeat on your other ear if needed. Also, you may find more than one flushing per ear may be required to rid yourself of ear wax.

**Can I have my ears syringed by a health care professional if I prefer or if the self help method does not work?**

We regret that our practice is not funded to provide this service.

It may be worth noting that there is not good evidence for the benefit of ear syringing (wax serves a protective function in preventing infection in the ear canal) and the there is a small risk of harm (damage to the ear canal and even perforation of the ear drum).

If you still wish to have your ears syringed, then the options available are:

* + - Referral to Ear Clinic at John Radcliffe (waiting time is approximately 12-16 weeks) – if you want this then the please book a routine appointment with a Health Care Assistant who can check your ears for wax and then will arrange for your GP to do the referral.
    - Private wax removal services are available in Witney and surrounding area.