

Managing ear wax: information for parents and carers

When not to use drops

- Do not use drops if you suspect your child has a perforated eardrum
- Do not use Sodium bicarbonate drops if your child has grommets, only consider olive oil spray if this has been recommended by your healthcare professional.

Which drops to use?

Olive oil

Olive oil will help to soften the wax and is useful for longer term use, for people with recurrent wax issues. You can use olive oil from home or purchase a spray from the pharmacy. Olive oil does not dissolve the wax but softens it.

Sodium bicarbonate drops

Sodium bicarbonate drops actively dissolves the wax. This type of drop maybe suggested as it is a quicker more effective method for wax removal. These drops should only be used for 7-10 days at a time. Then you will need a break before using them again if required.

How do I put the drops in my child's ears?

- You will need to warm the drops to body temperature before putting them into your child's ears.
- Lay the child on their side with the ear to be treated facing upwards.
- For sodium bicarbonate drops put the prescribed number of drops in the ear.
- For olive oil just add a few drops down the ear.
- If you can get your child to remain lying on their side for 5 minutes, this would allow for the drops to soak in.
- Don't be alarmed if your child reports a drop in hearing and/or can hear popping or other strange sound – this is caused by the drops working their way down.
- You can put a piece of cotton wool in your ear as a temporary measure to stop any drops running out again.
- If you are to treat both ears wait 30 minutes before treating the other ear.

How often should the drops be used

Olive oil

Use daily after your initial appointment to help soften the wax. Then use on a weekly basis until your child's review appointment in Audiology.

Sodium bicarbonate drops

Use for 7-10 days after your initial appointment and then restart again for 7-10 days before your child's next review appointment in Audiology – your audiologist or nurse will advise when this is likely to be.

If your child experiences any pain, stop using the drops and discuss this further with your healthcare professional.

If you have any questions or concerns you can contact the Audiology Department on 0118 322 7238.

For further information about Audiology, visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/audiology

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If you would like this leaflet in other languages or formats (e.g. large print, Braille or audio), please contact the Audiology Department.

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