



Managing ear wax: information for parents and carers

This leaflet give advice on managing ear wax in children.

When not to use drops

- Do not use sodium bicarbonate drops if your child has grommets or if you suspect your child has a perforated eardrum.
- 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. It is particularly effective if your clinician has cleaned your child's ears in order to prevent rapid re-accumulation.
- **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 can be purchased from the pharmacy. They 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 should 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. This may be done while they are asleep if it is easier.
- 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 will allow 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.
- Roll child over so treated ear is down to allow any excess drops/wax to come out. Stay in this position for a further 5 minutes.
- You can put a piece of cotton wool in the ear as a temporary measure to prevent staining of clothes etc.
- 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 2-3 times per week until your child's review appointment in Audiology. You will be advised as to how long for.
- **Grommets:** It is sometimes useful to use olive oil in the ears 2-3 times per week for the duration that they are in place. It is also believed that olive oil can prolong the duration the grommets remain in place, which is a good thing in young children.
- **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.

Other advice

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, contact the Audiology Department on 0118 322 7238. For further information about Audiology, visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/audiology

Contact us

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To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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