

Managing ear wax

This leaflet explains how to manage your ear wax using drops. Check with your Audiology Team, GP or pharmacist before using any drops or 'over the counter' products for ear wax.

When not to use drops

- Do not use drops if you suspect you have a perforated eardrum. You should discuss any drops with your audiologist, GP or other relevant health care professional.
- If you have grommets do not use sodium bicarbonate drops, and 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. You can use a few drops once or twice a day. Olive oil does not dissolve the wax but softens it.

Sodium bicarbonate drops

Sodium bicarbonate drops actively dissolves the wax so are a quicker, more effective method for wax removal. These drops should only be used for 7-10 days at a time. You will then need a break before using them again, if required.

How do I put the drops in my ears?

- You will need to warm the drops to body temperature before putting them into your ears.
- Lay on your 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.
- It is useful to lie on your side for 5 minutes, to allow for the drops to soak in.
- Don't be alarmed if you have 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.

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