**SELF TREATMENT OF EAR WAX**

Ear wax is a natural cleansing substance for the ears. It helps to protect against infection and water damage. It can become impacted in the ear canal often by using cotton buds inappropriately and causes dulled hearing, discomfort, occasional ringing (tinnitus) or even mild dizziness.

An accumulation of ear wax can usually be treated with oils and drops from the chemist.

Some GPs recommend using Portia Ear Syringe / Otex Combi Pack – available from most chemists.

This is an effective method of relieving the symptoms of blockage and discomfort and because you are in control of the pressure used, has been shown to be a safe alternative to syringing performed by a healthcare professional.

**DO NOT SELF TREAT IF YOU HAVE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:**

a) Pain or discharge from the ear d) History of Cleft Palate

b) Past or current perforation of eardrum e) History of ear surgery

c) Ear infection within 6 weeks f) Latex allergy

g) Ever been advised against ear syringing by a health professional

**SEEK ADVICE FROM YOUR GP IF YOU EXPERINENCE ANY OTHER ABOVE**

**HOW TO SELF TREAT**

1. Soften the wax with ear drops either of sodium bicarbonate or olive oil for at least 7-10 days.

a) These products are widely available at the supermarket or a pharmacy.

b) The drops should be room temperature and put inside the ear 3 times a day and allowed to soak for 2-3 minutes.

TIP: If cotton wool is used to stop the oil leaking out, coat the cotton wool in Vaseline to prevent it soaking up the oil.

c) Oil should be allowed to drain away from the ear.

2. Use the ear syringe bulb with body temperature water (approx 37C / 98F) to flush out the softened wax.

It is important to follow the instructions with the bulb.

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

e) Gently pull your outer ear "up back and out" to help straighten out the canal.

f) Tilt your head to one side and gently squirt one or more bulb syringes of water into your ear.

g) 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.

h) Repeat if needed. You may find more than one flushing per ear may be required.

You may need to repeat this process every few days, continuing to soft the wax with oil in between, until the ear feels unblocked.

If symptoms of blockage do not improve after 2 weeks of regular treatment with oils and drops as described above, please contact the surgery to arrange a 10 minute appointment with the Health Care Assistant for assessment and advice only.

Referral:

If after assessment it is agreed that you do need to have your ears cleared of the wax then we can arrange an appointment with an NHS service locally but this may take a few weeks.

You should continue to use ear wax softening treatment in the meantime

If you develop any new symptoms particularly pain in the meantime you should contact your GP again.

Other information:

Very rarely ear flushing can cause dizziness (if water is not body temperature) but quickly settles. Occasionally people develop irritation in the outer ear with itching and redness. If this occurs consult your GP.