

Patient Information Factsheet

For parents of children and young people requiring removal of ear wax

Department of Paediatric Audiology

Wax is a normal substance that helps to keep the ears clean and healthy. Most of us have some wax in the ear canals which usually works itself out of the ear but, on occasions, the presence of ear wax can be problematic, particularly with the use of a hearing aid, causing it to whistle. Sometimes the Doctor may advise the removal of wax to improve the level of hearing, to allow for impressions to be taken for a hearing aid mould or to allow for a clearer view of the ear in case of problems with the ear drum or ear canal.



Never poke anything into the ear canals - we strongly advise NOT TO USE ear buds.

Never insert anything into your child's ears to remove wax (particularly cotton buds) as this can:

- Cause the wax to be impacted by pushing it further into the ear.
- Damage the wall of the ear canal and cause inflammation.
- Perforate (tear) the eardrum.

Prior to wax clearance the Doctor will often advise the use of olive oil for a few days, or sometimes longer, to soften the wax. This makes it easier for the wax to be removed. We advise that you only use ear drops that the doctor has recommended.

There are three methods that can be used to remove wax from your child's ears. The method selected will take account of your child's age, expected levels of understanding and special needs if any. If necessary, a Health Play Specialist can be present at the appointment to distract your child while the Doctor performs the procedure.

1) The Doctor may use a wax hook, or a curette (a scoop-shaped surgical instrument) to remove the wax.



2) The Doctor may decide to clear the wax using suction clearance. This procedure is only carried out at Lister and Hertford County Hospital. The suction clearance method is the only method of wax removal appropriate if your child has one of the following:

- Perforated ear drums.
- Previous ear operations.
- Structural problems of the ear canal.

This method involves the child lying on a couch while the Doctor examines the ear under a microscope and gently removes the wax by inserting a small probe into the ear and sucking the wax out.



3) The Doctor may at times decide that irrigating the ear is the best way forward. This procedure is carried out by a trained clinic nurse. Water at body temperature is gently introduced into the ear canal to remove the wax using a pulsed water-jet system. This will wash the wax out into a container. The Doctor will check inside the ear before, during and after ear irrigation.



Contact details:

If you require any further information please contact the Paediatric Audiology department on direct telephone number 01438 737786

Date of publication: January 2016
Author: Linda Parker/Paediatric Audiovestibular Medicine
Reference Number: 1
Review Date: January 2019
© East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust

www.enhersts-tr.nhs.uk

You can request this information in a different format or another language.

