

THE MARLOW MEDICAL GROUP

Ear Syringing – What you need to know

We do not carry out routine ear syringing (also known as ear irrigation) but this leaflet will provide you with the information you need to know.

If you think your ears are blocked with wax don't try to remove the earwax yourself with your fingers, a cotton bud or any other object. This can damage your ear and push the wax further down. Instead it is recommended that you use ear or bulb syringing at home.

Ear drops: Ear drops alone will clear a plug of earwax in most cases. Put 2 or 3 drops of ordinary olive oil down the ear 2 or 3 times a day for 2-3 weeks. This softens the wax so that it then runs out of its own accord without harming the ear. You can continue for any length of time, but 3 weeks is usually enough. Surprisingly, you will not necessarily see wax come out. If you are prone to repeated wax built up you can continue to use olive oil drops twice a week to prevent recurrence. If olive oil does not work you can buy sodium bicarbonate drops from pharmacies.

How to use ear drops:

1. Warm the drops to room temperature before using them
2. Pour a few drops into the affected ear
3. Lie with the affected ear uppermost when putting in drops
4. Stay like this for 10 minutes to allow the drops to soak into the earwax.

Bulb Syringing: This is a safe, alternate way to remove ear wax. Bulb syringes can be easily purchased from a pharmacy and allow you to clear your ears from wax in your own home. If your ears are painful or have fluid coming out of them, or if you have a hole in your ear drum (perforation) or have recently had surgery on your ear you should see a doctor or nurse and not use this method.

Instructions for Bulb Syringing:

Use olive oil drops twice a day for at least 14 days prior to bulb syringing. Or alternatively use sodium bicarbonate ear drops purchased from your pharmacy (please read the manufacturers leaflet.)

1. Wash your hands.
2. Use a bowl of cooled, boiled water that is warm to the touch, not too hot or too cold
3. Prepare the syringe by squirting water in and out of it a few times.
4. Gently pull your outer ear "up and out" to help straighten out the canal, which will allow better access for the water
5. Tilt your head so the ear to be treated is upmost.
6. Place the tip of the syringe into the opening of the ear.- Do NOT push the syringe further into the ear and gently squirt one or more bulb syringes of water into your ear. (This might be best done in the shower so that the excess water will run into the bathtub and not on your floor)
7. 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

If, after 3 weeks or more, you are still deaf from wax, you will need to make an appointment with an HCA/Nurse who can assess and refer if appropriate.

Ear irrigation (ear syringing):

Ear irrigation is only recommended on rare occasions where ear drops and bulb syringing ear has failed to work. Ear syringing can lead to ear infections, perforated ear drum and tinnitus (persistent noise) and therefore it is only performed in exceptional circumstances. If you think you have persisting wax despite taking the above measures please make an appointment with a nurse to discuss. Please note we can only refer you for ear irrigation (syringing) if you have treated with olive oil for 2 weeks.

For more information on how to treat ear wax, please go to www.marlowdoctos.co.uk or NHS Choices website.

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