

## When not to use it:

Do not use a bulb syringe in the following circumstances

- A history of ear drum perforation in the affected ear
- Symptoms of infection in the ear - usually pain or a smelly discharge
- If you only have hearing in one ear (which is the affected ear)
- Previous surgery on the affected ear

In the above circumstances, make an appointment to see the practice nurse to have your ears examined and treated.

## Benefits:

- The main benefit of the syringe is that you can use it yourself without needing to make an appointment to see the practice nurse
- Reduces the risk of infection from standard ear syringing
- Many patients who use the bulb syringe are successfully treated
- The patient can control the water pressure applied in the ear and respond to any discomfort
- It is cheap to buy and can be re-used, so you can repeat the procedure if required
- Hearing aids can benefit from regular ear wax removal, as the dense wax can sometimes lead to feedback and whistling noise and affect the quality of sound from the hearing aid

# EAR WAX BUILD UP HELPFUL TIPS



A build-up of earwax in your ear can cause:

- earache
- hearing loss
- tinnitus (hearing sounds from inside your body)
- itchiness in or around the ear
- vertigo (a spinning sensation)
- ear infections

These problems will usually improve once the excess earwax has been removed.

Earwax is one of the body's protective devices. It protects the body from bacteria, dust and micro-organisms that can get in and cause irritation or infection. Earwax lubricates the ears and without it, they would feel dry and itchy.

The ears are usually self-cleaning as the skin cells of the ear drum and ear canal are constantly migrating outwards and most people do not need to interfere with their ears at all. Some people make more wax or their ears do not clean the wax as effectively as others. In these cases wax can build up inside the ear, and can sometimes cause a blockage sensation and reduced hearing.

## What to do if you think your ear is blocked

You can treat earwax impaction with eardrops in the first instance. There are several different types of eardrops you can use, including drops containing sodium bicarbonate, olive oil or almond oil. These can help soften the earwax so that it falls out naturally. However, eardrops aren't suitable for everyone and some can irritate the skin. For example, eardrops shouldn't be used if you have a perforated eardrum (a hole or tear in your eardrum). Speak to your pharmacist about the most suitable product for you and make sure you read the leaflet that comes with it.

Never put a cotton bud or any other object in your ears to try and clear the wax. This pushes the wax further into the ear making it worse. It can also cause infections and damage the eardrum. **Cotton buds should never be put inside the ear!**

An ear bulb syringe should be used when one or both ears are blocked with wax and the wax hasn't cleared by using ear drops.

## Self-Treatment of Earwax with a Bulb Syringe

If the wax does not clear after the use of eardrops, patients can self-treat with a bulb syringe. A bulb syringe is a small bulb shaped rubber object that will fill with water and allow the user to squirt the water gently into the ear to remove earwax. You can buy it from most pharmacies or online.

### How to use it:

(If you experience any pain during this procedure, stop immediately and see the practice nurse for review)

- Put some clean warm (not hot) water into a bowl. Squirt the bulb syringe in the water a few times to fill it up with warm water.
- Hold your head to one side so the affected ear is facing upwards. You can do this in the shower or bath or lay on the bed with a towel underneath your head.
- Gently pull your ear in an upwards and outwards direction so that the water gets better access to the ear canal. Hold the nozzle inside the ear canal (not too deeply) and gently squirt the water from the bulb syringe into the ear. You can gently squirt more water into the ear if needed. Leave the water in your ear for 1-3 minutes to soften the wax.
- Tilt your head over the sink so the water can fall out. Wiggle the outer part of the ear to help the water and wax come out.
- Repeat for the other ear if both ears are affected.