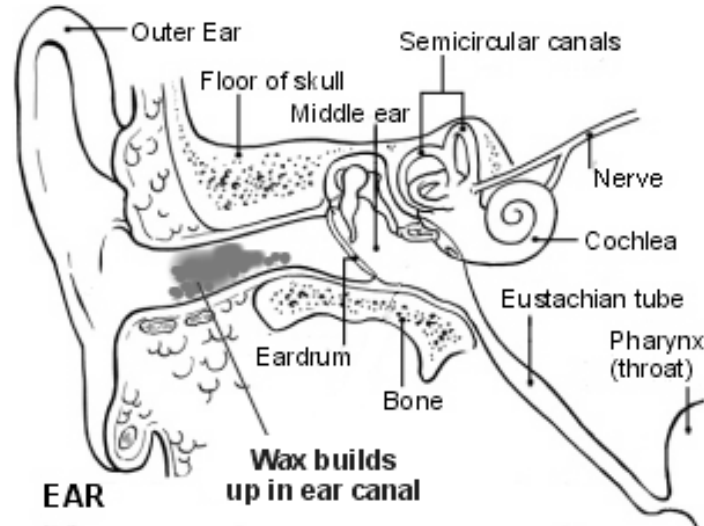


Framlingham Medical Practice

Ear Syringing & Ear Care Guide

Ear Syringing/Ear Care

If there is a build-up of wax in your ear(s) please read the following self-help guide as you may not need an appointment.



What is ear wax?

Earwax is a build-up of dead cells, hair, foreign material such as dust, and cerumen. Cerumen is the natural wax produced by glands in the ear. It forms a protective coating of the skin in the ear canal. Small amounts are made all the time. Flakes or crusts of earwax break off and fall out of the ear from time to time.

The quantity of earwax made varies greatly from person to person. Some people form plugs of earwax in their ear canal. This may cause a feeling of fullness and dulled hearing. A hard plug of earwax can also sometimes cause 'ringing in the ear' (tinnitus) or even a mild type of dizziness (vertigo). Some people produce excessive amounts of ear wax which can lead to a blockage in the ear canal.

You are more likely to develop a blockage of wax in the canal if you:

- use cotton ear buds to clean the ear as this pushes the wax deeper into the canal
- wear a hearing aid, ear plugs or use in-ear speakers for i-pods or similar - as these can all interfere with the natural process of wax expulsion
- have abnormally narrow ear canals
- have a particularly hairy ear canal
- are older – because the ear wax you produce is drier and harder
- have a dry skin problem such as eczema or psoriasis

A GP can look into the ear canal and confirm a plug of earwax has formed. A plug of earwax is not a serious problem, more a nuisance. You only need to remove earwax if it is causing symptoms such as dulled hearing. Earwax may also need to be removed for fitting of a hearing aid, or if a doctor or nurse needs to examine your eardrum.

Advice to help you manage and prevent ear wax blockage

Ear wax only becomes a problem if it causes deafness, discomfort or if your Health professional requires a clear view of your ear drum. If you experience any of the following, you should seek advice from your GP:

- Pain
- Discharge or bleeding from the ear
- Sudden deafness or buzzing
- Foreign bodies in the ear
- Dizziness

If you are not experiencing any of the above, we recommend that you manage the blockage as following:

What can I do if earwax builds up and causes symptoms?

Olive Oil Drops –

The following needs to be done 2 or 3 times daily for 14 days.

- Lie on your side with the affected ear uppermost
- Pull the outer ear gently backwards and upwards to straighten the ear canal
- Put 2-3 drops of olive oil into the affected ear(s) and gently massage just in front of the ear
- Stay laying on your side to allow the wax to soak in for around 10 mins
- Afterwards, wipe away any excess oil but do not plug your ear with cotton wool as this simply absorbs the oil

Your hearing problem may initially worsen after first starting to use the olive oil drops; this is why we advise you to concentrate on treating one ear at a time if both ears are blocked with wax. In most cases, after 14 days, the wax will have softened sufficiently to encourage the wax to come out without further intervention. However, if you feel your hearing is still impaired, please make an appointment with a GP for further advice and management.

Rubber Ear Syringe bulb:

This product is available to buy without prescription from our Dispensary in Framlingham and Earl Soham. This product is very simple to use as follows*:

- Wash your hands and always use a clean syringe (each syringe is for single patient use only)
- Fill the syringe (rubber bulb) with cooled boiled water that is WARM to the touch. Do not use hot water.
- Tilt the head so the ear to be treated is on top.
- Place the tip of the syringe into the opening of the ear but don't push further into ear.
- Squeeze the rubber bulb gently to insert a small amount of water into the ear.
- Keep the head tilted in this position for 5 to 15 mins

**Please see packaging for full instructions*

Ear Syringing –

This is only usually considered if the above recommendations have proved to be unsuccessful. Ear Syringing may be needed if ear drops do not work. Irrigating the ear with water will usually clear plugs of earwax. But, it often only works if the plug of earwax has been softened. Therefore, use ear drops (such as olive oil ear drops) to soften wax 2-3 times a day for 3-5 days prior to irrigation. Ear Syringing is usually painless. Lukewarm water is squirted into the ear canal. This is usually done by a machine that squirts water at the right pressure. This dislodges the softened plug which then falls out with the water.