

# Ear Care

Our policy on ear syringing has changed to meet current evidenced based guidelines.

We shall therefore only be syringing ears if you have a hearing aid or been asked by Audiology/ENT to have this done or have recently seen your GP who advised you to make an appointment for this. Please read below for further information:

## **What is the normal function of ear wax?**

Ears are designed to clean themselves. Wax in ears is normal, although excessive wax can result in hearing problems.

Ears need wax for lubrication and protection. Ear wax is acidic and has bacterial and fungicidal properties. Water left in the ear canal can lead to infection so try to keep your ears dry.

## **What can I do if wax builds up?**

A plug of wax is not a serious problem, really more of a nuisance. Do not try to clean the ear canal yourself. Frequent zealous use of such instruments as cotton buds, rolled towel ends, hair grips etc. can make things worse as you will push wax deeper inside. It may also cause an ear infection. **The main message is to let the ear 'clean itself.'**

Ear drops alone will often clear a plug of wax... and in which case syringing may not be required. If wax is impacted, you should use sodium bicarbonate drops 2 times a day for at least 7 to 10 days.

- Lie on one side with the affected ear uppermost
- Pull the ear lobe upwards and backwards, and add 2-3 drops into the ear canal. The massage just in front of the ear after insertion.
- Stay lying down on your side for 5 minutes
- Sit up and wipe away any excess oil – Do not put cotton wool at the ear entrance.

## **Can/should I get my ears syringed?**

Evidenced Based Medical Guidelines state that ear syringing should NOT be carried out routinely as it can lead to ear damage, infection, dizziness and tinnitus (which can be lifelong). Ear syringing can also run the risk of perforation of the ear drum. Therefore, ear syringing should only be carried out as a LAST RESORT if your symptoms have lasted several weeks, are significantly affecting your quality of life, and the above ear drop management has not worked.