

Friendly Family Surgery

PATIENT INFORMATION FOR EAR IRRIGATION

All patients must see a doctor before having their ears syringed to ensure that the procedure is suitable and that there is no infection.

Please mention to the doctor if you have ever had surgery to your ears or have ever had a perforated ear drum.

Wax forms naturally in the ear canal its purpose is to protect the ear by trapping dust and other particles from entering the ear. The wax usually makes its own way to the ear opening where it is washed away. Some people seem to produce more wax than others. As we get older the ear wax tends to become less moist and it does not come out of the canal so easily. If you have continuing problems with ear wax it may help to put one or two drops of olive oil in your ear once or twice a week.

Cotton wool buds should never be used as they will push the wax further into the ear canal. Olive oil drops should be put in the ear twice a day for 7-14 days.

If your ear becomes blocked with wax it may be possible to wash it out at the Surgery. Nurses used to syringe wax out of the ear which meant squirting the water into the ear under pressure to remove the wax. It has been found that this may be harmful to some patients so nurses now irrigate the wax out of the ear with electrical equipment which is safer. This procedure uses less pressure so there is less risk of damage. However it is important that the ear is well prepared for this procedure by instilling olive oil.

To put in drops

- Lie on your side and pull the ear upwards and backwards and put 2 or 3 drops of oil in the ear canal
- Massage just in front of the ear gently
- Stay in that position for at least 5 minutes
- Do not put cotton wool in the ear as this will draw out the oil

Olive oil is better than drops as they do not irritate the natural acidity of the ear which helps to prevent infection.

Potential risks are associated with irrigation. These include:-

- Trauma to the ear canal
- Infection
- Tinnitus (noises in the ear). This may be aggravated or instigated by irrigation
- Perforation of the ear drum
- Deafness

Occasionally irrigation may make a person dizzy or faint. Having water in your ear can give a muffled sound. It is important that the water is at a comfortable temperature and you must tell the nurse if the water is too hot or too cold or if you feel dizzy.

Irrigation may be uncomfortable but is not usually painful; you must tell the clinician immediately if you experience any pain.