

Caring for your Ears – a self help guide for adults

What is Earwax?

Wax is normal and is produced by the ear to protect and clean it. It only becomes a problem when the ear makes too much. Too much wax can make you feel uncomfortable or make it difficult to hear.

Ear Irrigation

Ear irrigation is a way of safely removing a build up of ear wax that has not been cleared naturally or by other treatments, i.e. ear drops.

Ear irrigation may be needed if ear drops do not work. But, it only works if the earwax has been softened using ear drops, 2-3 times a day for 5 days prior to irrigation.

Before ear irrigation can take place a nurse will have to look in your ears to see whether you can have the procedure.

Benefits of Ear Irrigation

Ears are normally self cleaning. Earwax forms a protective coating of the skin of the ear canal. As people become older earwax can become less moist and does not come out of the ear canal as easily. Irrigating your ear(s) with warm water will usually clear your ear(s) of wax, but will only work when the wax has been softened by using ear drops.

Ear irrigation is usually painless. A machine squirts warm water into the ear canal at the right pressure. This removes the soft wax which falls out with the water. This may then increase your level of hearing.

Risks of Ear Irrigation

Some people feel dizzy after ear irrigation, but this quickly settles. Some people develop redness in the ear canal following ear irrigation. This can cause itching and discomfort, but can be treated with ear drops. Ask your pharmacist or GP for further advice.

If ear irrigation does not work, or is not advised, you may be referred to an ear specialist for removal of your earwax.

If any of the following occur after the ear irrigation procedure, seek advice from your doctor:

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

Never push anything into your ears.

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 for you,
with you