

Adult audiology department

Wax build-up: guidance

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Introduction

This leaflet provides advice about reducing the build-up of wax in the ears.

Our ears produce wax to protect our eardrums. Wax traps dust and other particles which get into the ear. The wax slowly works its way to the outside, taking the trapped particles with it.

Hearing aids block your ear canal and therefore you are more likely to experience a build-up of wax after you start using them. This may prevent audiology tests from being performed as the wax can obstruct the view of your eardrums and it can also affect the performance of your hearing aids.

Mild wax build-up

In mild cases of wax build-up, you can try the following steps at home to help address the problem:

Use olive oil ear drops

Use olive oil to encourage the natural movement of wax from the outer ear or to soften the wax before wax removal. You can buy olive oil and a dropper from your local pharmacy.

Use sodium bicarbonate ear drops

Sodium bicarbonate can be used as an alternative to olive oil. However, if you have sensitive skin, you should avoid using this. Only use these drops for one week.

How to put the drops in:

1. lie with the affected ear facing upwards
2. using the dropper put a few drops into the affected ear
3. stay lying down with this ear facing upwards for 2-3 minutes to allow the drops to soak into the wax
4. repeat the process in the opposite ear if necessary

How often you do this depends on how much wax you have and how hard it is. Please ask an audiologist or your nurse/GP for guidance on this.

If you think that you have a hole in your eardrum (a perforation) you should not put any drops in your ear. Speak to your doctor about wax removal instead.

Please note: You must not attempt to remove wax from your ears yourself. Do not use cotton buds or insert anything into your ear as it may damage your eardrum/canal and push the wax further down the canal. If wax removal is needed, please contact your GP to arrange this.

Contact details

Charing Cross Hospital (Adults)	St Mary's Hospital (Adults)	St Mary Abbots Hearing Aid Centre (Adults)
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How do I make a comments or suggestion?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments**, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Charing Cross Hospital) or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's Hospital).

You can also email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net. The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department: Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street London W2 1NY.

Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net
Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team: imperial.communications@nhs.net

Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information, visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk

Adult audiology
Published: August 2023
Review date: August 2026
Reference number: 2983
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