



Ear Irrigation

A Patient Guide

What is ear irrigation?

- The aim of ear irrigation is to remove earwax, which is blocking your ear canal, by using water. A Nurse or Nursing Associate will use a machine to put a jet of warm water into the ear canal, to loosen the earwax, and remove it from the ear canal.
- Having your ears irrigated can be uncomfortable, but it should not hurt.
- It takes about 30 minutes to have your ears irrigated.

Are there any risks?

- There is a small risk that the procedure could cause damage to your ear drum, middle ear, and inner ear, which could affect your hearing.
- There is also a risk of infection.
- Your Nurse or Nursing Associate are there to answer any questions that you might have and can help you decide if you want to have your ears irrigated.

What do I need to tell my Nurse or Nursing Associate?

You should tell your nurse or nursing associate if you have experienced any of the following:

- If you have pain/ tenderness in your ears
- If you have had an infection in your ears
- If you have ever had an ear operation
- If you have a cleft palate or a repaired cleft palate
- If you have ever had damage to your ear drum
- If you have any discharge from your ears
- If you normally are deaf or have poor hearing in one of your ears.



Do I need to do anything before my appointment?

- To make it easier to remove the wax and reduce the risk of having your ears irrigated, it is important to soften the wax. Sometimes softening the wax can help the wax come out of the ear by itself.
- We recommend that you use **2 drops of olive oil, 3 times per day, for 5-7 days** before your appointment for ear irrigation.
- An olive oil spray is also available which some people might find easier to use. Please ask your health care professional or your pharmacist about this.
- To put the oil in your ears you should:
 - Make sure the oil is at normal room temperature. **Do not** heat the oil.
 - Lie on your side or tilt you head.
 - Put 2 drops of olive oil into your ear.
 - Continue to lie on your side or keep you head tilted for 5 minutes.
 - Once the 5 minutes is over you can use cotton wool or a paper towel to mop up any oil that comes out of your ear.
 - **Do not put cotton wool or tissue in your ear.**

What should I do after having my ears are irrigated?

- You should keep your ears dry for 5 days.
- You can use cotton wool covered in petroleum jelly to prevent water entering your ear canal, when showering or bathing.
- **Do not** use a cotton bud to dry or clear the wax from your ears. This is because the tip of the cotton bud can come off in your ear and cotton buds can push the wax onto your ear drum.
- If your ears become painful, red or start to leak any discharge, you should call your doctor or 111 for advice.
- Some people find they continue to have problems with wax building up in their ears.
- You can try putting 1-2 drops of olive oil in your ears once a month. This will not stop your body from making the wax, but it will help to keep it soft and help it to come out by itself.



Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please email whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net. We will try our best to meet your needs.

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