



Why have we stopped doing ear syringing?

The NHS no longer provides or recommends ear syringing as a routine procedure. This leaflet tells you all about ear wax and how to deal with it—if you really, really need to.

Understanding Ear Wax

- ❖ Earwax is a natural substance made up of dead skin cells, hair, dust, and protective wax.
- ❖ It forms a protective barrier in the ear canal.
- ❖ Everyone produces different amounts of earwax.
- ❖ Your ears are self-cleaning—jaw movements (while talking and eating) help move wax out of the ear canal naturally.

Ear Wax is only a problem if it causes:

- ❖ Pain, or a sensation that your ear is 'blocked'.
- ❖ Difficulty when a practitioner can't see the ear drum.
- ❖ Hearing loss (if you have hearing aids, consult your practitioner to confirm that wax is the cause).

What Can Make Ear Wax Worse

- ❖ Wearing hearing aids, ear plugs, or headphones.
- ❖ Naturally narrow or hairy ear canals.
- ❖ Harder, drier wax as you age.
- ❖ Dry skin conditions (e.g. eczema or psoriasis).

What to Avoid

- ❖ Cotton buds! These push wax deeper and can cause damage or infection.
- ❖ Hair grips, matches, crochet hooks, knitting needles, keys, etc, etc.
- ❖ Don't scratch itchy ears with fingers or objects.
- ❖ Golden rule: Don't put anything smaller than your elbow in your ear!

What Can Help

- ❖ Keep ears dry. Apply a little Vaseline around the ear canal before washing hair or swimming.
- ❖ Avoid submerging your head in water.
- ❖ If you regularly get blocked ears, use olive oil ear drops once a week. Don't use ordinary olive oil.

When to contact a GP or an advanced practitioner

Submit a request via SystemConnect on our website. Call our Reception if you have:

- ❖ Ear pain.
- ❖ Bleeding or discharge from the ear.
- ❖ Sudden hearing loss.
- ❖ Dizziness.
- ❖ An object in the ear (whether an adult's or a child's ear).

Self-Care for Ear Wax Build-Up

Most blockages clear with ear drops alone:

- ❖ Use olive oil ear drops: 2 or 3 drops, 2 or 3 times daily for up to 3 weeks. Don't use ordinary olive oil.
- ❖ The oil softens the wax, allowing it to naturally work its way out.
- ❖ You may not see wax come out—it will often pass unnoticed.
- ❖ If olive oil does not help, try sodium bicarbonate ear drops from a pharmacy.

How to Use Ear Drops

- ❖ Allow the drops to warm to room temperature.
- ❖ Lie down with the affected ear facing up.
- ❖ Add 2–3 drops into the ear.
- ❖ Stay in position for 10 minutes.
- ❖ Do not plug your ear with cotton wool afterwards.

Self-irrigation (over-the-counter option)

You can buy ear irrigation kits at pharmacies. These usually include full instructions and:

- ❖ Wax softener drops (used for 3 or 4 days)
- ❖ Small bulb syringe for gentle irrigation of the ear canal.

Do not use self-irrigation if:

- ❖ You have ear pain, discharge, or a perforated eardrum.
- ❖ You've recently had ear surgery.

Instead, book an ear check with the nurse at Albany Surgery, Newton Abbot (you can book your appointment at Albany by calling **our** Reception on **01626 832666**).

Private Ear Care Services

There are several fee-charging ear care services locally, including Chudleigh Pharmacy, which offers:

- ❖ Ear checks—no appointment needed.
- ❖ Microsuction ear cleaning (a fee is charged for this).

Contact: **01626 854977**

<https://chudleighpharmacy.co.uk/>

What About Ear Syringing?

Ear syringing (irrigation) is only offered at Albany Surgery in exceptional cases, and then **only** if ear drops and bulb syringing have failed **and** it's clinically appropriate.

Risks from syringing include:

- ❖ Ear infections.
- ❖ Perforated eardrum.
- ❖ Tinnitus (ringing/buzzing—can persist for a long time).

If you believe your symptoms persist after self-care, book an ear check with the nurse at Albany Surgery, Newton Abbot (you can book your appointment at Albany by calling **our** Reception on **01626 832666**).

Need More Help?

For further support or to book an appointment:

- ❖ Call our Reception on **01626 832666**
- ❖ Visit our website to make a SystemConnect request:
<https://www.towerhousesurgery.co.uk>
- ❖ or use <https://systmonline.tpp-uk.com> if you prefer.