



Self-care Information

Earwax

Tips on how you can self treat a build-up of earwax
“Supporting you to look after you”

Key advice:

- **Try not to use things like cotton buds to remove earwax. They can push the wax further in and make the problem worse.**
- **Try using olive oil ear drops to soften the build-up of wax.**
- **Speak to your local pharmacist. They may be able to recommend other medicines to treat the problem.**

What is earwax build-up?

Earwax occurs naturally in your ears.

It usually falls out on its own, but sometimes it doesn't, and can block your ear.

A build-up can be caused if:

- You have lots of hair in your ear canals.
- You have narrow or damaged ear canals.
- You have inflammation of your ear canal (known as Otitis Externa)
- You have a skin condition affecting the area around the ear.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms can include:

- Loss of hearing.
- Earache.
- Ears feeling like they are blocked.
- Ringing or buzzing sounds in the ears.
- Feeling dizzy or sick.

How can I prevent earwax?

Earwax is there to protect your ears from dirt and germs. You cannot prevent it. If you find the build-up of earwax to be a regular problem for you, you could try using eardrops for a few days to keep the wax soft. This will help it fall out on its own, and prevent the ears getting blocked.

How to use eardrops

- Lie on your side, with the affected ear facing upwards.
- Gently pull the ear backwards to straighten the ear canal.
- Put 2 to 3 drops of medical grade olive oil (or other drops if recommended) into your ear.
- Gently massage just in front of your ear.
- Stay lying on your side for about 10 minutes to allow the drops to soak in.
- Try not to plug your ear with cotton wool, this will just soak up the drops.
- Repeat 3 to 4 times a day for 3 to 5 days. Speak to your pharmacist for advice if it has not cleared up after this time.



Speak to your local pharmacist for advice on which eardrops would be most suitable for you.

Some pharmacies may offer an earwax removal service.



Let your pharmacist know if you take any other medicines, or if you are pregnant or breastfeeding, as this may affect which treatments you can use safely.

See your GP if:

- Your symptoms have not cleared up after trying treatments.
- Your ear is very blocked, and you can't hear anything (You can get an infection if it has not cleared).
- You have pain in your ear.
- You have discharge or bleeding from the ear.
- You experience dizziness.
- You have a foreign body in your ear.

Not all GPs can remove earwax. You may need to have this done privately.

Here are some useful links to further information

NHS Website	https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/earwax-build-up/
Patient Websites	https://patient.info/ears-nose-throat-mouth/hearing-problems/earwax
Or visit your local pharmacy for advice	

