

## How to apply olive oil ear drops (or sodium bicarbonate ear drops if unable to use olive oil)

Follow these instructions to safely apply ear drops to your ears at home

Use 2-3 drops 2-3 times a day for 2 weeks

1. Lie on your side with the affected ear facing up



2. Gently pull your outer part of your ear back and up to open your ear canal



3. Put two or three drops of olive oil in the opening of your ear



4. Gently massage the skin at the front of the entrance to your ear canal to help the oil work its way in



5. Remain on your side for 5 to 10 minutes



6. Tilt head to the opposite side of which you have applied the oil. Do this for 2-3 mins to encourage wax to come to the start of ear canal

**Repeat in the other ear if needed**

## 1. What is earwax?

Sometimes excessive wax can build up inside the ear canal causing symptoms such as ear pain, hearing loss, and fullness in ears or itchiness. This can happen for a number of reasons including hairy or narrow ear canals, using hearing aids and the use of cotton wool buds.

## 2. How can it be treated?

A build-up of ear wax can be treated with eardrops which are available from your local pharmacy. These can help soften and loosen the earwax, which may help it work its way out naturally.

- **Sodium Bicarbonate solution:** Prior to your ear microsuction appointment apply 2-3 drops 2-3 times a day for 2 weeks.  
The sodium bicarbonate dissolves the wax. Your hearing may temporarily worsen as the wax swells before it dissolves. For this reason we suggest treating one ear at a time. The drops should be left in your ear for up to 3 minutes. When it improves you could use the drops less frequently e.g. twice a week, to reduce further build-up of wax.
- **Olive oil:** This comes as a spray or drops and is used to soften the wax. This is a more gentle treatment and is often recommended if you have eczema in your ears. Prior to your ear microsuction appointment apply 2-3 drops 2-3 times a day for 2 weeks.
  - On a long-term basis after the wax build up is clear you should apply this treatment once daily (perhaps before sleeping) to prevent the build-up of wax. It is not necessary to put cotton wool in your ears afterwards. **We never recommend you use cotton buds in your ears.**
- **Other ear wax drops:** There are a number of other ear drops such as Otex, which help remove wax. Your pharmacist will be able to advise you.
- **Irrigation or Microsuction:** If ear drops have not been successful (or appropriate) in removing your ear wax, you may be referred by your GP to have a further procedure either Irrigation or microsuction to remove the earwax under direct vision. The procedures are quick and safe.

## 3. Do you have an Audiology appointment?

- Your ears will need to be free from wax for your audiology appointment. If your ears contain wax, it may lead to delays in your treatment and require additional appointments. Olive oil drops can be used to soften ear wax and help it come out of the ear. Use 2-3 drops 2-3 times a day for 2 weeks before your appointment.

**If you know or suspect that your eardrum is perforated do not use drops unless directed by your Doctor.**