

Nettleham Medical Practice
Ear Wax Management: A Guide to Effective Oiling.

Wax is a normal bodily secretion which provides protection for your ears. It is designed to stop dust, dirt and foreign bodies entering the ear canal and causing damage to the ear drum or the delicate skin lining of the canal itself.

- Your ears are self- cleaning and if you use cotton buds to remove the wax, it will only be pushed further down the ear canal and block the ear.
- If you have repeated problems with wax blocking your ears, using olive oil drops regularly may prevent this.
- In some circumstances we may be able to syringe your ears to help clear the build-up of wax but this procedure is not suitable for all. Your ears should only be cleaned by a nurse trained in ear care as they are able to see directly into your ear canals – you are unable to do this.

Olive oil encourages the natural movement of wax from the outer ear by softening it. It is advisable to buy a bottle of olive oil and a 'dropper' from your local pharmacy.

The majority of patients find that applying 3-4 drops twice a day into the affected ear for at least 2 weeks helpful for wax removal

How to instil drops

- Lie down with the affected ear upwards.
- Gently pull the outer ear backwards and upwards. Using room temperature olive oil and the dropper drop 3-4 drops in the ear canal and gently massage the area in front of the ear.
- Remain lying down for approximately 10 minutes and when you sit up, wipe away any excess oil. Do not put any cotton wool in your ear canal as this will absorb the oil.
- Repeat the procedure with the opposite ear if necessary.

There is an olive oil spray available to buy from the pharmacy or supermarket which could be used instead of a dropper, avoiding having to lie down for 10 minutes. This can be useful for people with poor mobility who may find it difficult to lie on one side, or children who often will not lie still for the desired length of time.