

# DR MITCHELL & PARTNERS

## A PATIENT'S GUIDE TO GOOD EAR CARE

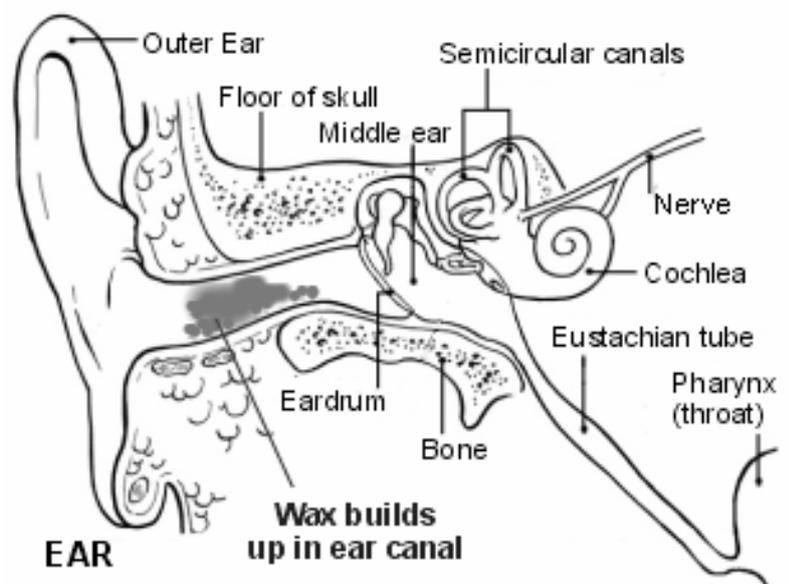
### INTRODUCTION

Many patients book appointments with their GP or Practice Nurse to have their ears syringed. This may be to try and improve their hearing by clearing out wax. Although a common procedure, ear syringing is NOT risk free. This leaflet is designed to provide you with an understanding of good ear care and explain why syringing should NOT be considered a routine method of wax removal.

### WHAT IS EAR WAX?

Ear wax forms a protective coating of the skin in the ear canal. Small amounts are made all the time. Flakes or crusts of wax break off and fall out of the ear from time to time.

The quantity of ear wax made varies greatly from person to person. Plugs of wax form in some people. This may cause a feeling of fullness and dulled hearing. A doctor or nurse can look into the ear canal and confirm a plug of wax has formed. A plug of wax is not a serious problem, more a nuisance. You only need to remove wax if it is causing symptoms such as dulled hearing, itch or discomfort.



Note: do not try to clean the ear canal with cotton wool buds etc. This can make things worse as you will push some wax deeper inside. It may also cause an ear infection. Let the ear 'clean itself'.

### DO MY EARS NEED SYRINGING?

Although syringing is usually a safe procedure, at times it can be unpleasant and occasionally painful complications ensue: e.g. perforated ear drums, infection, nausea and dizziness.

Even if syringing is successful in removing wax, hearing loss may not improve, as this may be due to some other cause apart from wax.

### WHEN YOUR EAR SHOULD NOT BE SYRINGED

- If you have a chest/ear/throat infection
- If you have a pain in your ear or have undergone previous ear surgery
- If you have a hole [perforation] in the ear drum
- It is your only hearing ear
- If you have a discharge from the ear

## **WHAT IS THE ALTERNATIVE?**

### **OLIVE OIL**

Lie on your side and insert a dropper [from the chemist] full of olive oil into the ear canal, then plug the ear with cotton wool.

Do this twice a day for 10 days.  
This should clear your ears naturally.

If both your ears are blocked, consider doing one ear only, until it is cleared, and then treat the other one.

If the symptoms persist then continue with the oil until you can have an appointment to have your ears examined.

### **FOLLOW UP**

After your ears have cleared naturally or been cleared, oil should be used in your ears once a week and reviewed with a nurse every 3-6 months.

### **GENERAL TIPS**

Never use cotton buds to clean out the wax, they will push it back down the canal.