



Ear Wax

Patient Advice

The aim of this leaflet is to give advice about:

- Ear wax
- What can I do if wax builds up and causes problems?
- Ear drops and how to get them into your ear
- Removal of ear wax
- Ear Care Clinics Tayside
- After wax removal
- General advice about looking after your ears

Ear Wax

Ear wax forms a protective coating of the skin in the ear canal. Small amounts of wax are made all the time. The amount of wax made varies from person to person. Plugs of wax are made in some people. These plugs may cause a feeling of fullness and dulled hearing. An audiologist will look in the ear and confirm a plug of wax has formed. This is not a serious problem but does need removing, as it will interfere with some of the Audiology investigations.

Ear drops

Ear drops alone will often clear a plug of wax. You can buy these drops from pharmacies. For example, sodium bicarbonate, almond oil or olive oil ear drops; all three work as well as each other. These should be used for 7 to 10 days prior to your appointment

Do not use drops if you have a perforated eardrum (hole in your eardrum)

Warm the drops to body temperature before using them. Put them in your pocket or hold them in your hand for five minutes before using them.

Lie with the affected ear uppermost when putting in drops. Pour 3 – 4 drops into the affected ear (it is easier if someone can do this for you).

Apply gentle on and off pressure with your finger to the cartilage at the front of the ear opening 3 – 4 times.

Lie with the affected ear uppermost for 5 minutes to allow the drops to soak in. The drops soften the wax and it often breaks up and comes out on its own. 3 – 4 drops of sodium bicarbonate can be used twice daily for one week.

If after using ear drops you still have wax then you can be referred to the Ear Care Clinics for ear wax removal.

Ear Care Clinics Tayside

In Tayside there are three main providers for wax removal. Please note you may need a referral to a specialist nurse at the hospitals if you have had your ears operated on. Please speak to your GP if you need this.

Angus

You must be registered with an Angus GP to access this Service. You can refer yourself for this service.

To book please contact: **01241 822527 – Arbroath Infirmary**

Clinic Locations:

Arbroath Royal Infirmary

Stracathro Hospital

Dundee

You must be registered with a Dundee GP to access this Service.

You can refer yourself for this service by visiting a local community pharmacy (any local chemist to you). They will advise you on the best way forward and will be able to refer you to the Ear Care clinics in Dundee if their treatment does not clear the wax.

Clinic Locations:

Ardler Health Centre

Broughty Ferry Health Centre

Hillbank Health Centre

Lochee Health Centre

Ryehill Health Centre

Wallacetown Health Centre

Westgate Health Centre

Perth and Kinross

You must be registered with a Perth and Kinross GP to access this Service.

You can refer yourself for this service by visiting a local community pharmacy (any local chemist to you). They will advise you on the best way forward and will be able to offer advice and eardrops. The Perth and Kinross Community Care and Treatment Service (CCATS) provide ear assessment and irrigation and is staffed by trained nurses.

If using the ear drops for 7 days does not clear the wax, the pharmacy will give you the contact number of our single point of contact (SPOC) where patients can phone to book an appointment in one of our ear clinics. The SPOC number is 01738 413099 and they will triage each person to ensure they have followed the required guidance prior to offering an appointment.

There are CCATS clinics across Perth and Kinross in various locations.

After Wax Removal

Once you have had your ear wax removed, if you require a further appointment in Audiology, for example you are due to get your hearing tested; please contact Audiology Tayside on the details below.

Please note that you will be added to the relevant waiting list and will be allocated a slot when you reach the top of that waiting list.

General Advice about looking after your ears

Do not use cotton buds or any other object to clean your ears. These push the wax further in and can cause irritation. The ear canals clean themselves.

Audiology Tayside

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Developed by Audiology, Tayside.
Audiologists and patients were involved in the development of this leaflet.
Reviewed by patients and staff involved in the Patient Participation Group.

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This leaflet can be made available in other languages and formats on request
Speak to the healthcare professional looking after you to arrange this