

EAR BLOCKAGE AND WAX

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Why does my ear feel blocked ?

The commonest cause of the feeling of a blocked ear is earwax accumulation.

The human ear is designed to be self-cleansing, as the skin of the ear canal migrates outwards from the bottom of the canal around the eardrum up towards the ear opening. This periodically 'pushes' wax out of the ear automatically.

In some people, however, this process is not effective and the wax becomes stuck.

This is seen especially in those people who have narrow or hairy ear canals, wear hearing aids or have had previous ear surgery such as mastoidectomy.

People tend to try to remove wax with cotton buds, which often pushes the wax further down the ear canal – these are not to be recommended for this purpose!

The ear may also feel blocked if there is an ear infection and infective debris builds up in the ear canal.

In children, there is always the possibility that there is a foreign body stuck in the ear canal.

How can I help you?

I am able to look in the ear canal with a microscope and see and diagnose whatever the problem is straight away in outpatients.

Under the direct vision that the microscope allows, at the same time I can then quickly and painlessly remove whatever is causing the problem, using custom made instruments and a special suction device, without the need for flushing out or irrigating the ear with any fluid.

What are the alternatives?

Wax softening eardrops (such as Otex or Sodium Bicarbonate eardrops, which you can buy from a chemist) or olive oil to soften the wax may cause the wax to loosen and fall out of the ear.

Some GP Practices offer an ear syringing or irrigation service which in many cases is entirely satisfactory, but this can sometimes not be effective if the wax is completely filling the ear canal or if your wax is moist and particularly tenacious.

The fluid that is flushed through the ear during this process can also sometimes cause discomfort, and subsequent ear infection as a result.

For further information please see

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Earwax/Pages/Treatment.aspx>