

## Audiology department contact details

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# Ear wax

Information about ear wax  
and its removal

## What is ear wax?

Ear wax is also called cerumen. It is made in the outer ear canal. It consists of natural secretions (in your ear canal) and combines with skin and dust particles. Everyone produces different amounts of wax. The amount produced is highly variable from person to person. Clearly you should **never** insert anything into your ear canal such as cotton buds as this can result in wax problems and serious injury to the ear.

## What is the purpose of ear wax?

A normal amount of ear wax helps keep your ears healthy and clean. Wax protects the ear from dust and insects also has anti-fungal and anti-bacterial.



## Do I need to have ear wax removed?

There is not normally any reason for ear wax to be regularly removed unless a significant build up of wax is present. The skin inside the ear canal naturally grows out from the ear. Soft wax will be brought out from the ear canal during this process.

## What can I do about the wax?

You should **never** poke anything into your ears to try and move the wax. This includes fingers, cotton buds and hair pins! It may help to use olive oil or products available from your pharmacist (unless you have a perforation: a hole in your eardrum or have been advised against it by a doctor).

## How should I have the ear wax removed?

If the wax does not come out on its own your audiologist or GP may advise you to have your ear syringed. This procedure is usually carried out by a nurse using a water-irrigation system. Patients are generally advised to soften the wax for a week before the syringing appointment. The nurse will squirt warm water into the ear canal in order to remove the wax.

## Other wax removal methods

If you cannot have your ears syringed (for example, if you have had previous middle ear surgery or a perforated ear drum) then you may be referred to the ear nose and throat department for the suction clearance method or for clearance with a wax hook.