

Self Care Briefing for Clinicians: Earwax

Summary

Blocked ears due to the accumulation of ear wax can be treated without the need for a GP consultation or prescription in the first instance. This can easily be treated with simple over-the-counter preparations such as ear drops.

Recommendations for clinicians

- Provide the patient with a 'non-prescription' sheet or a patient information leaflet to promote education about self-limiting conditions suitable for self care when appropriate. See: [NHS.uk-Earwax build-up](https://www.nhs.uk/earwax-build-up)
- Advise patients of safe and effective self care measures:
 - Ear wax usually falls out on its own.
 - If wax doesn't fall out or blocks the ear, ear drops can be used to loosen wax. Consult a pharmacist.
 - Do not use fingers or objects such as cotton buds to remove wax.
 - No evidence that ear candles or ear vacuums remove ear wax.
- Advise patients to seek medical attention if:
 - Earwax hasn't cleared after 10 -14 days of using treatment.
 - Hole in ear drum – perforated eardrum.
 - Persistent vomiting or fever.
 - Ear is badly blocked and they have hearing loss.
 - Patient is an infant or young child.

Examples of over-the-counter products available to buy

Please advise patients that suggested prices are, a guide, correct at the time of writing and are subject to change.

- Olive oil ear drops (BP): (£1.00 to £1.42 for 10ml). Do not use if: swelling, pain or discharge.
- Sodium bicarbonate ear drops (BP): (£1.00-£1.25 for 10ml). Discard 28 days after opening.
- Olive oil spray: Adults and children 12 years OLD and above (£6.00 for 10ml).
- Audiclean® cleansing wash: Adults and children above 6 months old (£11.00 for 115ml). Do not use if history of ear problems or pain or discharge from ears.

Further information

- [Selfcare forum](#)
- [NHS.uk](https://www.nhs.uk)
- [Patient UK](#)

Document History

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