

# Advice for Students with Ear Wax Problems

The primary purpose of earwax (cerumen) is to protect and clean the ear from dust, bacteria and foreign materials. Cerumen is produced in the outer third of the cartilaginous portion of the ear canal. It is a mixture of viscous secretions from sebaceous glands and less-viscous ones from modified apocrine sweat glands.

In the UK 2-6% of the population have impacted ear wax. Symptoms of impacted ear wax include: hearing loss, blocked ears, itchiness, mild discomfort, sense of fullness in ear, discharge from ear, tinnitus, cough. Students may notice symptoms after water getting into the ear canal which may cause the impacted wax to expand.

Certain people are more prone to ear wax problems than others. This may be because they: produce more wax than others, have narrow ear canals, have more hair in their ears or have a skin condition like eczema. Stress or fear can also increase the quantity of ear wax produced, students may find excess ear wax problems around exam time. Other factors which push the ear wax back into the ear canal can cause impaction, including: use of cotton buds, ear plugs and music headphones.

## Treatments for Excess Ear Wax

### Ear Drops

This is considered the first line of treatment and will often resolve the problem completely. Students can buy wax ear drops over-the-counter at any local pharmacy, oil drops are usually recommended. The oil softens the wax within 7-10 days and often the wax will clear itself. Ear drops are not suitable for people with a perforated ear drum.

### Irrigation

The SPC Doctor Surgery normally offer free ear syringing however, due to Covid-19 they stopped providing this service. Please call to ask if this service has been recommenced 01865 311234. You will need to use oil drops for 7-10 days prior to ear syringing at [the Doctor Surgery](#).

Some pharmacies sell home ear irrigation kits, however, the success rate of these is low.

### Micro-suction

[Tripp Hearing](#) - The only immediate treatment is offered privately. This location requires a bus or taxi ride to OX33 1YA. Tel: 01865 671500 to make inquiries.

Other providers usually require around 1 week of preparation with ear drops before treatment.

[Spec Savers](#) – Queens Street Oxford OX1 1ER Tel: 01865 – 255710

Micro-suction £55 for both ears.

Spec Savers recommend the use of Earol spray for 7-10 days prior to your appointment. This can be purchased from any local chemist, please read instructions carefully before use.

## How to Avoid Impaction of Ear Wax

Avoid putting anything into your ear canal including: cotton buds, ear plugs & music ear phones. People with ongoing ear wax problems may be advised to use oil drops on a regular basis to keep the wax soft.

## The College Nurse & College Doctor

Both the [College Nurse](#) and [College Doctor](#) can advise students with ear wax problems.

## Useful Information

- <https://patient.info/ears-nose-throat-mouth/hearing-problems/earwax>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/earwax-build-up/>
- <https://www.specsavers.co.uk/hearing/earwax>
- <https://www.specsavers.co.uk/hearing/earwax/impacted-earwax>