

KING CROSS PRACTICE

EAR IRRIGATION PATIENT LEAFLET

Ear wax is a normal body secretion; it provides protection against infection and dust particles. The ear is self-cleaning and the wax works its way out naturally. **Never use cotton wool buds to clean inside your ears** as they irritate the delicate skin inside the ear canal. They will also push the wax back into the ear and compact it.

Ear irrigation is not without risk. This includes:-

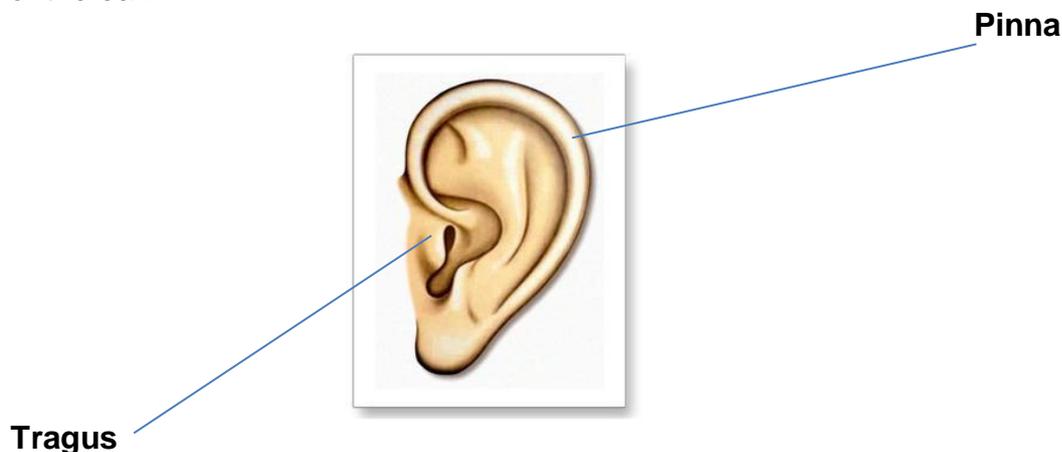
- Failure to remove the ear wax
- Pain/discomfort, dizziness/vertigo, nausea/vomiting
- Perforation of the ear drum, ear infection
- Worsening of pre-existing tinnitus (ringing in the ears)

BEFORE IRRIGATION to minimise the risk of harm, the wax should be softened with softening ear drops for at least 1 week before irrigation. We advise you start this straight away and continue to your appointment. Shop bought olive oil is advised. If you are experiencing discharge from your ear we are unable to perform irrigation. You may have an infection and need to arrange an appointment with a GP.

You may find that this treatment alone clears the wax in your ears. Please let us know if you no longer need your ears irrigated.

HOW TO USE SOFTENING DROPS

1. Lie down on your side with the affected ear uppermost.
2. Pull the pinna (outer ear) backwards and upwards (see diagram below). Drop two drops of oil, at room temperature, into the ear canal and massage the tragus – just at the front of the ear.



3. Remain lying down for 5 minutes and then wipe away any excess oil. **DO NOT** put or leave cotton wool at the entrance to the ear.

THE WAX SOFTENING DROPS TREATMENT

- Place 2-3 drops of ordinary olive oil down the ear 2 or 3 times a day for at least 1 week
- Do not place cotton wool in the ear as it only soaks up the oil
- The olive oil softens the wax which will run out of its own accord
- You may not necessarily see wax come out as it often comes out unnoticed

YOUR SAFETY CHECK LIST

YOUR CHECKLIST BEFORE THE IRRIGATION

- | | |
|--|--------|
| ➤ Have you undergone a minimum of 1 week of wax softening ear drops? | Yes/No |
| ➤ Have you had any ear pain in the last 6 weeks? | Yes/No |
| ➤ Are you presently suffering from a cold? | Yes/No |
| ➤ Do you have any ear discharge? | Yes/No |
| ➤ Do you have a history of ear perforation or ear surgery? | Yes/No |
| ➤ Have you had any problems with previous irrigation? | Yes/No |

If you are unsure whether you would wish to proceed with ear irrigation or are concerned about the risks, please discuss this with the nurse at your appointment prior to signing our consent form.

PRACTICE ACTIONS BETWEEN NOW AND YOUR APPOINTMENT

Once you advise us that you feel your ears need to be irrigated, we will:

- Add your name to our waiting list
- Make contact with you as soon as practicable to assess whether you need an appointment with our Health Care Assistant or Practice Nurse
- Book an appointment in one of our clinics (we aim to hold two clinics per month)

If you feel that you cannot wait until an available appointment, you have the option of private treatment with other providers. You will have to pay for this.

Should you decide on private treatment, please let us know so we can remove your name from our waiting list.

WE URGE YOU TO ATTEND YOUR APPOINTMENT WITH US

If you cancel your appointment: we will remove you from the list *unless you specifically request to be added back on to it*. You will then be placed at the end of the waiting list in normal circumstances

If fail to attend your appointment: we will remove your name from the list and you will have to contact us to start the process again.

DURING IRRIGATION

It can be uncomfortable to have your ears irrigated but it should not be painful.

During the procedure, please report the following immediately:-

- Any ear pain or dizziness
- If the water is too hot or cold
- If you want the nurse to stop

AFTER IRRIGATION and ONGOING CARE

After you have had your ears irrigated, keep them dry for a few days, as the protective wax layer has been removed. If you have continuing problems with ear wax, it may help to put 2-3 drops of olive oil once a week into each ear to keep the wax soft and aid its natural movement out.