

## 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 2 weeks before irrigation.

The procedure will only be carried out if the ear is completely blocked with ear wax despite, a 2 week regime (see below) of wax-softening ear drops. Very rarely, the drops may cause discomfort, burning, itching. If this happens, stop using the drops and seek advice.

### THE WAX SOFTENING DROPS TREATMENT

- Place 2-3 drops of ordinary olive oil down the ear 2 or 3 times a day for 2 weeks
- 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 CHECKLIST BEFORE THE IRRIGATION

- |  |        |
|--|--------|
| ➤ Have you undergone 2 weeks 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 |
| ➤ Have you a history of ear perforation, or ear surgery? | Yes/No |

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

### 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 too cold
- if you want the nurse to stop

**AFTER IRRIGATION**

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 putting in a few drops of olive oil once a week, to keep the wax soft and aid its natural movement out.

**EAR IRRIGATION PRACTICE PROTOCOL**

NAME	EMIS NO:
DOB	

<p><b>HISTORY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Undergone 2 weeks of ear drops</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No ear pain in the last 6 weeks</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No current UTI</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No unusual ear discharge</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No history of ear perforation, ear surgery, cleft palate</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No recent head injury</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Where there is hearing in one ear only do not irrigate that ear</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No previous complications with irrigation</li> </ul>	<p><b>EXAMINATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> There is enough obstructive wax present for irrigation (if eardrum is visible irrigation is not required)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Patient well enough to undergo procedure</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No evidence of infection (pain, swelling, discharge, blood)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No evidence of surgery</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No perforation seen</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No foreign body seen</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No dermatitis/psoriasis/eczema in canals</li> </ul>
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**CONSENT**

The nurse has;

- Asked me the above questions related to the ear irrigation procedure
- Explained the proposed treatment
- Given me written information about ear care, including drops and irrigation

I understand that the risks of ear irrigation includes

- Failure to remove ear wax
- Pain/discomfort, dizziness/vertigo, nausea/vomiting
- Perforation of the ear drum, ear infection and worsening of re-existing tinnitus

I have received and read a copy of the "Ear Irrigation Leaflet" and understand and accept the risks associated with ear irrigation. I agree that I do not have any of the conditions as detailed in the leaflet that may prevent me from undergoing ear irrigation.

I agree to having the ear irrigation performed on me

Signature

Date

#### NOTES FOR NURSE

Discuss with the GP

-where a valid consent cannot be given or where a risk assessment cannot be completed

-where the risk assessment has identified a problem requiring a treatment or referral