

EAR IRRIGATION: INFORMATION AND AFTERCARE

What is ear irrigation?

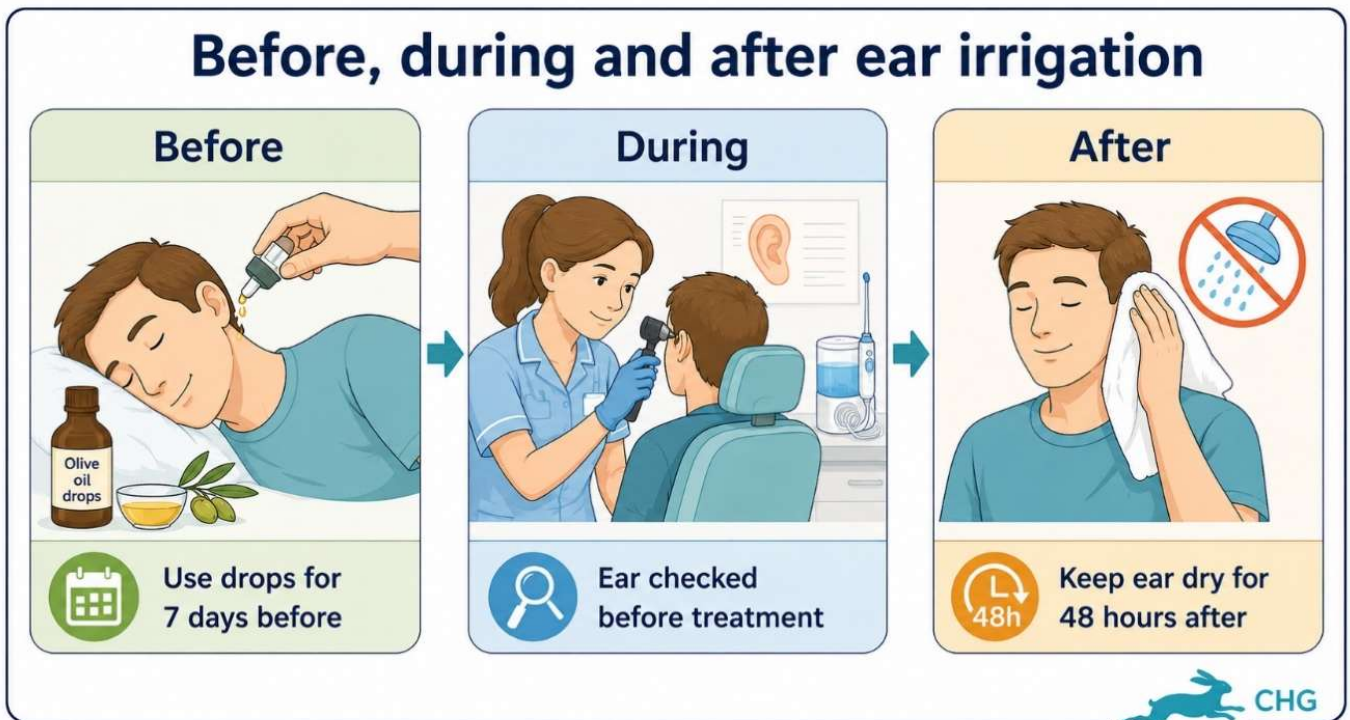
Ear irrigation is a procedure used to help remove ear wax using warm water.

It is usually only considered when wax is causing ongoing problems and has not improved with drops or other self-care measures.

A clinician will check your ear first to make sure irrigation is suitable for you.

Before your appointment

To improve the chance of successful wax removal, please use olive oil ear drops or spray for 7 days before your appointment, unless we have advised otherwise.



Use:

- 2 to 3 drops
- Morning and evening
- In the affected ear

How to use the drops:

- Lie with the affected ear facing upwards.
- Put the drops into the ear.
- Stay lying down for 5 to 10 minutes.
- Wipe away any excess oil from the outer ear.

Do not place cotton wool into the ear canal afterwards.

Tell us before the procedure if you:

- Have ear pain or discharge
- Have a known hole in the ear drum
- Have had ear surgery
- Have grommets
- Have repeated ear infections
- Only hear from one ear
- Have had problems after ear irrigation before
- Become very dizzy easily

What happens during irrigation?

Warm water is gently directed into the ear canal to help flush out softened wax.

The procedure is usually quick.

You may notice:

- A strange sensation
- Temporary dizziness
- Water noises
- A temporary blocked feeling

Please tell the clinician immediately if you feel pain or become unwell.

Risks of ear irrigation

Serious problems are uncommon, but all procedures carry some risk.

Possible risks include:

- Wax not fully clearing
- Temporary discomfort
- Temporary dizziness
- Ear canal irritation
- Mild bleeding
- Ear infection
- Worsening tinnitus
- Damage to the ear drum, including a small perforation

If wax cannot be fully removed, you may be advised to continue drops and return for reassessment.

Aftercare

For 48 hours after irrigation:

- Keep the ear dry
- Avoid swimming
- Avoid getting water directly into the ear
- Do not use cotton buds or other objects inside the ear

Mild crackling, sensitivity or dizziness for a short time afterwards can be normal.

Looking after your ears

Simple steps that help – and things to avoid

 DO	 DO NOT
 <p>Use olive oil drops Helps to soften wax and makes removal easier.</p>	 <p>Use cotton buds They push wax in further and can damage your ear.</p>
 <p>Wipe the outer ear Use a clean towel to gently dry around the outside of the ear.</p>	 <p>Use ear candles These are not safe and can cause burns and injury.</p>
 <p>Keep your ear dry Keep water out of your ear, especially for 48 hours after treatment.</p>	 <p>Use ear cameras or scraping tools These can scratch or injure the delicate skin of your ear.</p>

 If you have pain, discharge or are unsure, contact us for advice.



When should I seek help?

Please contact the practice if you develop:

- Increasing pain
- Ongoing dizziness
- Discharge from the ear
- Bleeding
- Reduced hearing
- Fever
- Symptoms that are worsening instead of improving

Seek urgent medical help if you develop severe pain, sudden hearing loss, facial weakness or severe dizziness.

Long-term ear care

If you are prone to wax build-up, using olive oil drops once or twice weekly may help keep wax soft.

Avoid routinely cleaning inside the ear canal.

Further reading

- **NHS: Earwax build-up**
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/earwax-build-up/>
- **NICE CKS: Earwax**
<https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/earwax/>

Further information and contacting us

If you need help, the best way to *contact us is **our online triage*** form on the **CHG website**:

- <https://www.cirencesterhealthgroup.co.uk/online-triage/>

If you cannot use the online form, please call the practice.

For **urgent** problems when we are closed, please use **NHS 111**.

For **emergencies**, call **999**.

