

PATIENT INFORMATION

How much ear wax is too much?

Ear wax (or cerumen) is a naturally produced water resistant substance produced in the ear to coat and protect it. An ear naturally sheds out ear wax and most of the time does not require assistance in removing it. We find that a common issue many people face, particularly as we get older, is that the ear wax can build up and become impacted and unable to shed away as it once could. This can impair hearing and cause ringing in the ear (tinnitus).

Ear buds are never recommended to clear the ear as it can lead to the wax being pushed and impacted deeper into the ear.

How can we safely remove ear wax?

- Syringing

Commonly in a GP setting ear syringing is performed where water is squirted into the ear to dislodge impacted wax.

The danger of this procedure is that it is done blindly with no way for the operator to know if the jet of water is damaging the surrounding structures such as the ear drum. A serious complication of ear syringing is rupture of the ear drum causing hearing loss. Other risks include vertigo (dizziness), pain and damage to the outer ear canal.

- Microsuction

Microsuction is a newer technique which minimizes the above risks. Unlike syringing, microsuction is performed under direct visualization of the ear canal with a high powered microscope thus reducing the risk of damage to the ear.

Microsuction also does not use water to remove ear wax but rather sucks out the wax gently with far less risk of trauma to the external ear or ear drum. As this technique does not use water the chance of vertigo is far less common.

An added benefit of microsuction is that it can be performed during an ear infection while syringing cannot due to the risk of damage. Because of this the infected debris in the ear can be removed by microsuction often resulting in far superior results and quicker resolution of symptoms. By the same principle foreign bodies can also be examined and removed with microsuction rather than sending a patient to hospital.

How can we prepare for wax removal?

As impacted ear wax can be quite hard it is important to prepare for its removal.

Softening up the wax is essential for achieving a high rate of success. We recommend using waxsol in the morning and evening the day prior to the procedure and a final repeat of waxol on the day of the procedure. A gentler approach to waxol is instead to use pharmacy grade olive oil but this may not be as effective. Failure to soften the wax sufficiently can lead to the procedure failing to remove the ear wax and the need to return after several days of further softening.

CONSENT FORM FOR MICROSUCTION

Like all procedures, performing microsuction has risks.

We at Myaree Medical believe that microsuction is a far safer option than alternative methods, such as ear syringing, for removal of ear wax.

RISKS OF MICROSUCTION

- Trauma: Trauma to the ear canal or ear drum is possible from microsuction as we are inserting a suction probe. Ear drum perforation is an extremely rare risk. This risk is minimized due to direct visualization during the procedure using a specialized microscope however a patient should stay still during the procedure to minimize this risk. The risk of trauma from microsuction is far less than performing ear syringing.
- Vertigo: Vertigo or dizziness can occur when performing microsuction as the suction of air can reduce air temperature in the ear. If this symptom occurs it is usually very short lasting. This risk is far less than ear syringing
- Infection: When inserting a foreign body, such as the suction probe, into the ear there is a risk of infection. This is an extremely rare risk and the same for any procedure performed in the ear. The ear probes are sterile and disposable after each patient.
- Noise: Performing microsuction may be uncomfortable for some due to the noise of the wax being sucked up by the small probe. Most people tolerate microsuction very well.

I _____ have read and understand the above risks. I have had my questions answered and am happy to proceed with microsuction.

Signed: _____

Date: _____