

## LOOKING AFTER YOUR EARS – *a self help guide for adults*

### GENERAL EAR HEALTH

#### What is wax?

Wax is normal and is produced by the ear to protect and clean it. It only becomes a problem when the ears make too much. The following can cause the ear to make too much wax:

- Excessive noise
- Surgery
- Infection
- Poking your ear (with cotton buds, hair grips etc.)
- Foreign bodies in the ear

Too much wax can cause blockage or make you feel uncomfortable or deaf.

#### General Tips to help you look after your ears:

- Try to keep your ears dry, for example when washing your hair. Shampoo may irritate the ear canal.
- Never lie in the bath water to wash your hair.
- Never use cotton buds or similar tools to clean the inside of your ears. This can cause serious injury to your ear. You also push the wax further into your ear canal.
- To help the ear to clean itself and prevent further buildup of wax, use 1 or 2 drops of olive oil in each ear once a week.

### PROBLEMS WITH YOUR EARS

Ears are self-cleaning, but if any of the following occur, get advice from your GP or nurse. Do not ignore problems with your ears:

- Pain
- Discharge e.g. bleeding, smell from ear
- Sudden deafness or buzzing
- Foreign bodies in the ear
- Dizziness

#### Difficulty hearing due to buildup of wax

##### Ear Irrigation

Ear Irrigation carries risks of perforating (making a hole in) the ear drum and infection, so this is not a treatment we undertake unnecessarily. In the majority of cases wax disappears using olive oil so before any appointment for irrigation is given we ask you to have applied olive oil once a day for at least five days and then, if the symptoms still persist, to book a short ear assessment appointment with the practice nurse. Irrigation will only be carried out if she recommends it.

#### How to apply drops

You can buy a 'dropper' bottle of olive oil from our chemist (the oil should be at room temperature).

*To use the drops:*

- 1 Lie down on your side with the ear to receive the drops on the top.
- 2 Drop 2 or 3 drops of oil into the ear and massage the front of the ear.
- 3 Stay lying on your side for 5 minutes. When you get up, wipe away any excess oil with a tissue. Do not leave cotton wool in the ear!
- 4 Repeat steps 1 to 3 for the other ear if needed.

#### Remember

- Ears need wax for protection
- Ears clean themselves
- Please don't use cotton buds or put **anything** in your ears
- Olive oil can help the ear to clean itself, if used regularly
- Try to keep your ears dry when washing your hair shampoo may irritate the ears. Dry thoroughly afterwards.

***Look after your ears – you only get one pair***