

Appendix 1. How to syringe your own ears, using a bulb syringe

Bulb syringes can be purchased in many pharmacies, or online, for a few pounds. Note you should not use a bulb syringe on a person with a damaged ear drum.

Prepare the ear by loosening the wax. Use a dropper to put a few drops of baby oil or olive oil in the ear, each morning and night, for a week. Specially designed "ear oils," or almond oil, do not need to be purchased. Lean the head on its side, pull a little on the ear lobe (to open the ear canal, and prevent oil from running right out) and drip the oil in. Often this simple action is enough to remove the wax, especially in children



Fill the bulb syringe with the warm water. Water that is too cold will hurt your ear, and if it is too hot, could burn you or make you dizzy. If you wish to be exact, heat some water to 98.6 degrees fahrenheit (37 celcius) using a food thermometer to get an accurate reading.

Now remove the ear wax. Tilt the head forward over the sink. With the tip of the syringe near the opening of the ear, squeeze the bulb of the syringe gently to release the water into the ear. Do not squeeze with too much force that the water injures the ear. Turn the head to the side of the ear you are cleaning, so the water runs out along with any wax deposits. Repeat if necessary.



Dry ear well. Use a towel to dry the outer ear. Drop a few drops of alcohol into the ear canal to help with drying the inner ear, if needed.

Some people get recurrent ear infections if water is allowed to get into the ear. This can be avoided by mixing a small amount of vinegar with water in equal parts, and using that to rinse the ear. Repeating this vinegar rinse twice a week should prevent ear infections from recurring. It is also useful for swimmers, and especially for those who get infections from swimming pools when on holiday abroad. Packing a small vial of vinegar in your suitcase may save you a lot of trouble!

Again, no special ear rinses need to be purchased, as these simply contain vinegar/water or vinegar/alcohol, and are much more expensive than making up your own rinse at home.