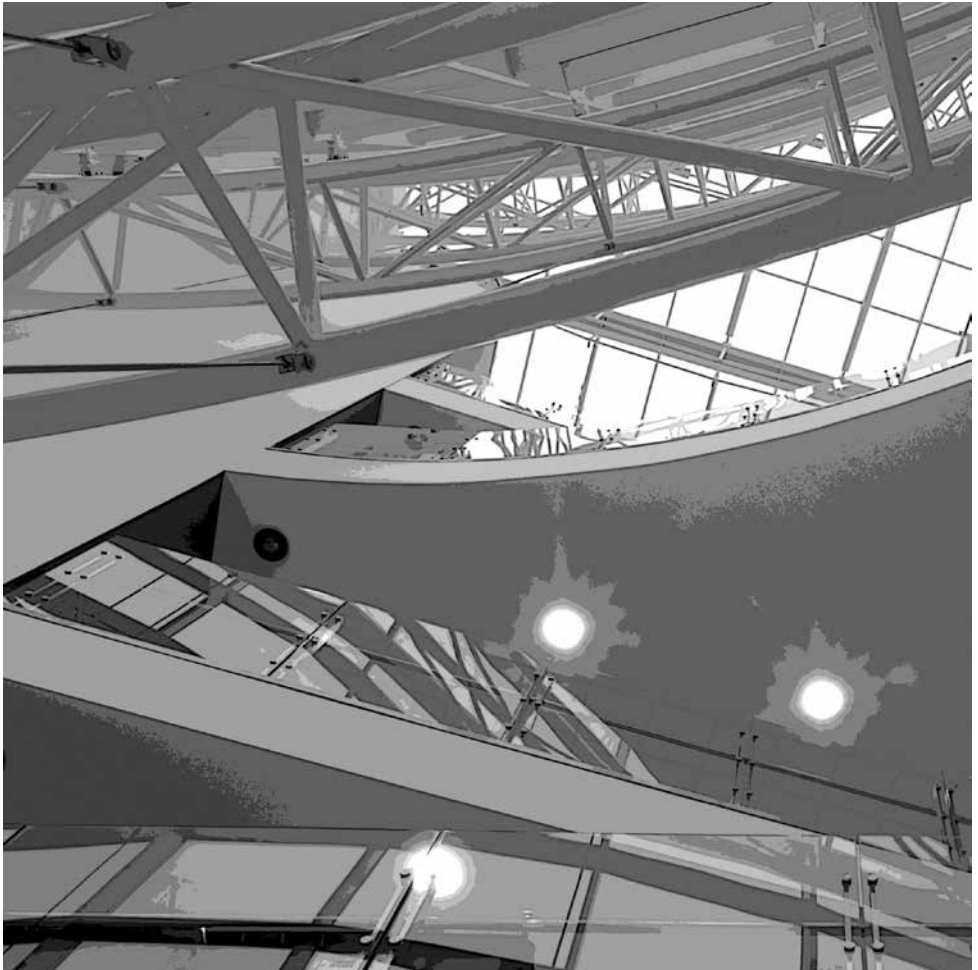


Oxford University Hospitals **NHS**
NHS Foundation Trust

Aural Care, West Wing

Welcome to the Aural Care Service



Who are we and what do we do?

We are nurses within the Ear, Nose and Throat department who have undergone specific training to allow us to specialise in ear care. This is known as Aural Care.

People who need some kind of specialist ear care are referred to us by GPs, ENT Consultants and the Audiology Department.

We see people who need or have had ear surgery; people who suffer with regular outer ear infections; those who wear hearing aids and people who have an underlying problem, such as a perforated eardrum, which prevents them from having other forms of wax removal, such as irrigation (formerly syringing).

Under direct vision (using a microscope) we will use suction to remove wax or dead skin from your ears. We use a tiny vacuum device, which sucks the wax away.

What happens at the clinic appointment?

At each appointment we will take a full history of your ear problem. We will also ask you about other illnesses or problems you have, including any medications that you may take. Sometimes other illnesses or problems can affect the way we treat you and may also be associated with your ear problem.

We will then examine your ears with an auriscope (which is like a torch for looking in ears) or a small camera. This allows us to see your ear up close and to also show you what your ear looks like on a display screen. This can help when we are explaining things to you and pointing out significant features.

We will then ask you to lie down on a couch (please let us know if this will cause a problem), so that we can look inside your ear with a microscope and light. Using a small microsuction probe, we will suck out any debris or wax to get a good view of your ear drum.

Once your ear is cleaned we will ask you to sit up slowly, as this procedure can sometimes make you feel dizzy. This is because the balance organ in your inner ear can be affected by sudden changes in temperature. As the suction can cool the inner ear very quickly, this can cause you to become dizzy. This dizziness passes after a few minutes. This is normal and is to be expected.

Microsuction can sometimes cause your hearing to change temporarily afterwards, but it should return to normal after a short while.

We will then talk with you about any further treatment that you might need.

What if I have an infection?

If you have a suspected outer ear infection, we may swab your ear to see which micro-organisms are causing the infection. If we swab your ear, this will be sent to the laboratory for analysis.

We will start some treatment; this may be a cream which contains antibiotic and a low dose steroid. We use this as it is a good “all-rounder” treatment. We may ask you to come back for a follow-up appointment.

If the swab result shows that the treatment we have started you on is not appropriate, we will telephone you and your GP to let you know. A prescription for an alternative treatment can then be organised for you.

Sometimes we will give you drops to use. We will give you a separate information leaflet which explains the best way to use these drops to achieve maximum benefit.

We will continue to see you until your infection has cleared. When it has gone we will give you advice about how to prevent further infections. We will then discharge you back to the care of your GP.

What if I need to be seen again?

If you need regular aural care (if you are a hearing aid user, have a history of ear surgery or cannot have irrigation for medical reasons) then we will let you know at your appointment.

We will try to see you as regularly as needed – this is usually every 6 or 12 months. Often, as time progresses, we can extend the time in between visits and see you less frequently. Most people will eventually be discharged from our care.

If you have been seen previously by the Aural Care service and discharged, we cannot see you again unless your GP has asked us to (referred you).

If you have a problem between your appointments you can telephone the Patient Contact Centre to try to bring your appointment forward (see the back of this leaflet for contact numbers).

If you need advice about a flare up of a problem or a new problem, please telephone us and we will get back to you as soon as we can. However, your GP should be your first port of call for any problems. If your GP wishes you to be seen quickly they can send you to the GP referral unit, here at the hospital.

What if I want to see a doctor or an audiologist?

If you would like to see a doctor at any point during your care, we will try our best to arrange this. If it is not possible to see one at the same time as your aural care appointment, we will write to your consultant and request an appointment.

Please note, we can only refer you to the doctor if the problem you want to see them for relates to your ears. If it is a different problem you will have to see your GP for a separate referral.

If you have a problem with your hearing we can request a hearing test for you. If this test shows that you would benefit from a hearing aid the audiologist will make arrangements for you to have one fitted.

How to contact us

Please do not telephone the Aural Care team to change your appointments – we cannot do this for you. Please telephone the Patient Contact Centre:

Tel: **01865 231 405**

The Aural Care team

To speak to a nurse:

Tel: **01865 231 202**

Please make sure you have your hospital number available when calling us.

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **PALS@ouh.nhs.uk**

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