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| Intervention | **089. Irrigation of the external auditory canal** |
| For the treatment of: | Impacted Ear Wax |
| Commissioning position | This intervention is not routinely commissioned and therefore should not be offered to patients. Application for funding approval can be made, using the IFR process, by the clinician recommending the intervention, if their assessment is that there are exceptional reasons why their patient could benefit from it. |
| Summary of Rationale | The vast majority of patients presenting with impacted ear wax will be able to relieve any symptoms with self-management and over the counter medication. NICE does not recommend manual syringing for removing earwax. Ear syringing with a large metal syringe or similar obsolete equipment is potentially harmful. The design of the syringe and the inability to control the water pressure increases the risk of damage to the ear canal and tympanic membrane. Irrigation using an electronic ear irrigation machine, which pumps water into the ear at a controlled pressure, is safer. Microsuction is also a safer intervention. Neither irrigation nor microsuction to remove impacted wax are provided by all GP practices but they are widely available privately. |
| References | [Earwax build-up - NHS (www.nhs.uk)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/earwax-build-up/)  [CKS Earwax (NICE)](https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/earwax/management/management/) |
| Effective from: | January 2025 |
| Policy Review Date | January 2028 |