

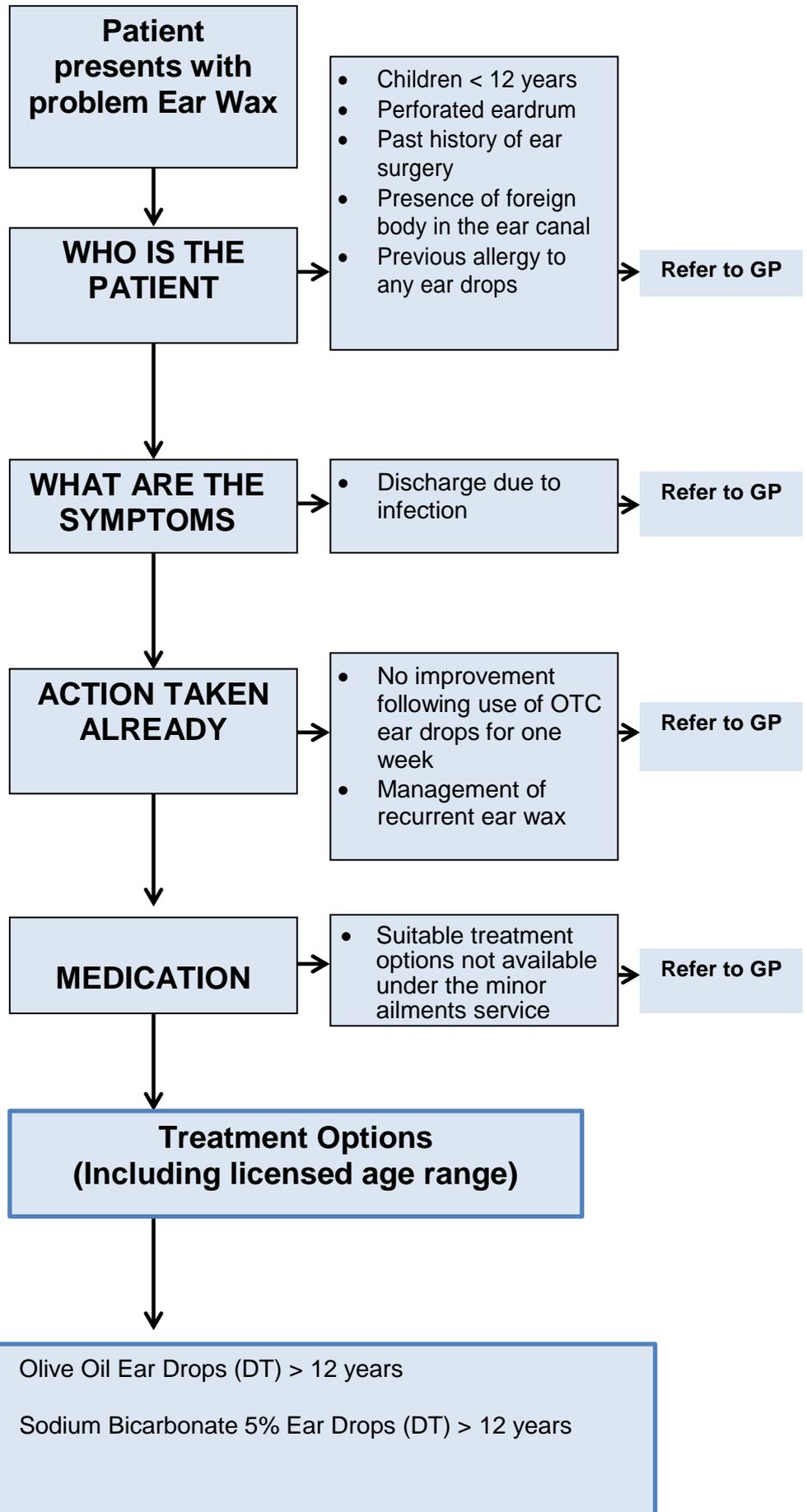
Ear wax is a waxy material that is produced by sebaceous glands inside the ear. It cleans, lubricates and protects the lining of the ear by trapping dirt and repelling water. Some people produce more earwax than others. It usually falls out of the ear gradually in small pieces or flakes. Sometimes earwax can build up and harden, creating a blockage called a 'plug'.

**Symptoms**

- Hearing loss
- Earache
- Tinnitus
- Itchiness
- Vertigo
- Cough suspected to be due to earwax
- Earwax causing hearing aid to whistle

**Advice**

- Do not put anything into the ear, eg cotton bud, as this can push the ear wax back towards the eardrum aggravating the impaction.
- Ear wax should only be removed if it causes discomfort or hearing loss.
- Ear wax build-up may reduce the effectiveness of hearing aids.



Advice for Self-Care / Non Pharmaceutical Treatment	Treatment Options Formulary Items		
	Drug	Dose and Duration	Advice
<p>Explain that removal of earwax may not necessarily relieve the symptoms (for example hearing loss may be a sensorineural loss and not due to impacted wax).</p>	Olive Oil Ear Drops (DT) 10ml	Use two or three drops in the affected ear twice daily for up to 7 days	Allow the solution to remain in the ear for 5-10 minutes each time the drops are used.
<p><b>How to use the ear drops</b></p>	Sodium Bicarbonate 5% Ear Drops (DT) 10ml	Use three or four drops twice daily for 3-5 days.	If symptoms have not improved after seven days see GP for further advice
<p>Before you start the treatment, read the manufacturer's printed information leaflet from inside the pack. It will give you more information about using the drops.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Wash your hands before you begin.</li> <li>2. Warm the drops to room temperature before using them. (Let the bottle stand in the room for about half an hour.)</li> <li>3. Lie down, or tilt your head a little, so that the affected ear is facing upwards.</li> <li>4. Gently pull your earlobe to straighten the ear canal.</li> <li>5. Release 3-4 drops into your ear to fill the ear canal. Try not to touch the inside of your ear with the dropper as you do this. If the drops are for a child, only insert as many drops as are needed to fill the ear canal.</li> <li>6. Keep your ear facing upwards for 5-10 minutes to keep the solution in your ear.</li> <li>7. Repeat the process in your other ear if you have been asked to use the drops in both ears.</li> </ol>			
<p><b>Further advice</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warn the person that instilling ear drops may cause transient hearing loss, discomfort, dizziness and irritation of the skin.</li> <li>• If symptoms persist after 7 days of treatment with ear drops, refer the patient to their GP for further advice / irrigation or onward referral as appropriate</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Management of recurrent ear wax</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To prevent wax becoming impacted, advise that regular use of ear drops may be helpful</li> <li>• There is no evidence to suggest the best type of ear drops or how frequently they should be used</li> </ul>		

**References:** Clinical Knowledge Summaries Ear Wax <https://cks.nice.org.uk/earwax#>

See individual SPC for further information/advice

Reviewed January 2018 - HSCB