ADVICE FOLLOWING IRRIGATION

The ear canal may be vulnerable to an ear infection after irrigation. This is caused by removal of all wax, which usually protects the ear canal.

Until the ear produces more wax to protect the canal, keep the ear(s) dry from water for a minimum of 4 or 5 days after the procedure.

To keep the ears dry when you are washing your hair, showering, bathing or swimming, insert ear plugs or a large ball of cotton wool coated in petroleum jelly into the outside of the ear canal(s) to act as a protective seal.

Following the evacuation of wax you can help reduce the need for further irrigation by instilling 3 or 4 drops of oil into your ear once or twice a week. This will keep the ear canal lubricated and help prevent the build up of wax – this is especially beneficial for those who use hearing aids.

If you have continued pain, dizziness, reduced hearing or discharge from the ear after the procedure, see your doctor or nurse.

If your symptoms have not improved with treatment or get worse see your doctor or nurse.

• Do not scratch your ears as this can spread infection.

If you have an excessive build up of wax which is causing problems, it may be removed by the District Nurse following an assessment.
**General Information**
The lining of the ear canal and the ear drum are very delicate and can be damaged easily.
However, there are basic rules you can follow to help avoid causing damage or infection.

- Never poke anything into your ears in an effort to dry or clean them. Cotton buds, hairgrips or matches, can easily damage the delicate lining or even burst the eardrum.
- If you are prone to ear problems, check with your doctor or nurse that it is OK to go swimming.
- Use ear plugs or a **LARGE** ball of cotton wool covered in Vaseline to keep the inside of your ears dry when washing your hair or showering.

**Before Irrigation**
Wax must be softened before it is removed and you will be asked to instil olive oil into your ear for 2 – 3 weeks.

This will assist with the wax removal process and reduce discomfort that may be felt during the procedure.

If following use of the olive oil you continue to have an excessive build up of wax which is causing problems it can be removed by the District Nurse. Please inform the nurse if you have had/suffered from any ear operations, perforated ear drum, pain or discharge from the ear before she starts.

**Patients with Hearing Aids**
Please arrange an appointment with the District Nursing Team to have your ears checked for wax, **two weeks prior to your Hearing Aid appointment at the hospital. Prepare your ears** as per instruction in this leaflet.

**How to insert olive oil into the ear canal**
Buy olive oil and a glass dropper bottle that has been designed for ears drops from a chemist or supermarket.

1. Put the closed glass dropper bottle containing the oil into a cup of warm water for 2 minutes. Dry the container and insert one drop of oil onto your hand to ensure that it is not too hot. If you feel the oil is too hot, wait for it to cool before commencing.
2. Holding the prepared dropper bottle lie on a bed with the affected ear towards the ceiling.
3. With one hand pull on the top of your ear (the pinna – see diagram) upwards and outwards to straighten the ear canal.
4. Place the filled dropper part of the bottle of oil over the entrance to your ear canal and flood olive oil into the ear.
5. Remain lying, lift and wiggle the pinna, then massage the tragus (see diagram).
6. Remain lying for 10 - 15 minutes. Wipe the excess drops that pool outside the ear when you sit up with tissue. **Do not insert cotton wool into the entrance of the ear canal as this will absorb the drops.**
7. If the drops are to be inserted into both ears, repeat steps two to four on the opposite side.
8. Ensure that drops are instilled for a minimum of 2 weeks prior to syringing.

**IF YOU HAVE A HISTORY OF PERFORATED EAR DRUM, DO NOT INSTILL DROPS INTO THE AFFECTED EAR – SEEK FURTHER ADVICE.**