

## Position statement on the prescribing for ear wax

Following the NHS England guidance 'Conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care: Guidance for CCGs' (March 2018) the following changes to prescribing have been agreed across Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge.

**From 16 March 2021**  
**Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge Clinical Commissioning Groups (BHR CCGS) no longer supports the prescribing of treatment for ear wax**

### Decision

The decision to stop treatment for ear wax applies to ALL patients across Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge unless the patient fall into one of the exceptions listed below.

If symptoms are not improving or responding to treatment, then patients should be encouraged to seek further advice from a pharmacy, NHS app, NHS website or NHS 111. For care home patients: access to treatment should be considered via a care home policy.

### Exceptions

BHR CCGs have agreed an exception to this recommendation, where they accept that prescribing should continue in primary care for:

- The clinician considers that the patient's ability to self-manage is compromised as a consequence of significant vulnerability to the extent that their health and/or wellbeing could be adversely affected, if reliant on self-care. Consideration should also be given to safeguarding issues

### This decision was made because:

- Earwax is produced inside ears to keep them clean and free of germs. It usually passes out of the ears harmlessly, but sometimes too much can build up and block the ear canal
- A build-up of earwax is a common problem that can often be treated using eardrops bought from a pharmacy. These can help soften the earwax so that it falls out naturally
- BHR CCGs have a duty to spend taxpayer's money wisely, to make sure they get the best value possible – especially when NHS funding is being severely squeezed and more patients are being seen with more complex health issues than ever before

### References

1. NHS website: earwax build-up- last reviewed: 28 January 2021. Page accessed 23 April 2021 <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/earwax-build-up/>
2. NHS England and NHS Clinical Commissioners. Conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care: Guidance for CCGs, March 2018. Publishing approval reference 07851 <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/conditions-for-which-over-the-counter-items-should-not-routinely-be-prescribed-in-primary-care-guidance-for-CCGs/>