



East Sussex Healthcare
NHS Trust

Ear wax - helpful information



What is ear wax?

- It is a normal secretion of the ceruminous glands in the outer ear
- It is also known as 'cerumen'
- It provides protection for your ears
- It is designed to stop dust, dirt or foreign bodies entering the ear canal and causing problems
- Wax is slightly acidic, which provides a natural protection from infection
- A build-up of wax is more likely to occur in older adults, hearing aid users or people who insert instruments into their ears
- Wax production can be increased by anxiety, stress, diet or hereditary factors

What can I do if wax is causing a problem?

If your child is experiencing any ear pain or discharge, you are advised to consult their GP.

If your child has problems with wax blocking their ears you can use an olive oil spray to encourage the natural movement of wax from the outer ear. This method is recommended by the Ear Care Centre.

An olive oil spray can be bought from a local pharmacist or supermarket. This method can ensure that the olive oil is safely, easily and correctly applied. This method avoids the need for the child to lie still after application. **DO NOT** put cotton wool in the child's ears after using the spray.

DO NOT use olive oil spray if your child has a perforated ear drum.

Alternatively you can use olive oil drops to soften wax. This method requires the child to lie still for 10 minutes after the drops have been instilled in the ear. See the Ear Care Centre website for details on the correct use of ear drops.

Other types of ear drops can be purchased, but may lead to dryness and irritation of the ear canal.

Do ears need to be cleaned?

Your ears should be self-cleaning. **DO NOT** use cotton buds to try and remove the wax, it will only be pushed further down the ear canal and block your ear. This can also lead to infection and damage to the ear.

Sources of information

Ear Care Centre - www.earcarecentre.com

NHS Choices - www.nhs.uk

Please feel free to contact the Paediatric Audiologists or Specialist Nurse if you require any further information Tel: 01323 444187

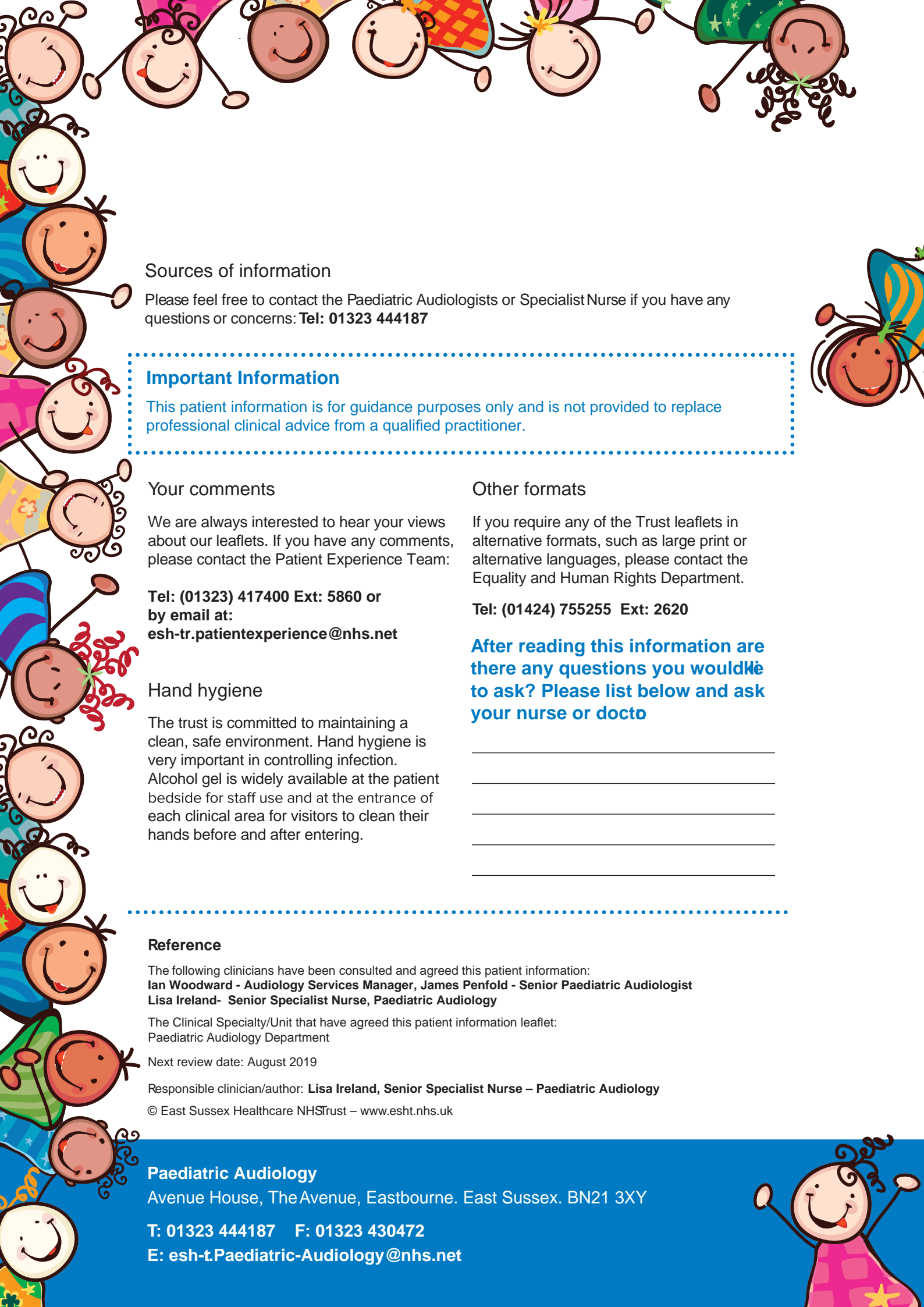
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Sources of information

Please feel free to contact the Paediatric Audiologists or Specialist Nurse if you have any questions or concerns: **Tel: 01323 444187**

Important Information

This patient information is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team:

Tel: (01323) 417400 Ext: 5860 or by email at: esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net

Other formats

If you require any of the Trust leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department.

Tel: (01424) 755255 Ext: 2620

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor

Hand hygiene

The trust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:
**Ian Woodward - Audiology Services Manager, James Penfold - Senior Paediatric Audiologist
Lisa Ireland- Senior Specialist Nurse, Paediatric Audiology**

The Clinical Specialty/Unit that have agreed this patient information leaflet:
Paediatric Audiology Department

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