



HOMES AND SENIORS SERVICES

POLICY & PROCEDURE NUMBER:

DEPARTMENT: *Nursing*

SUBJECT: *Ear Irrigation*

APPROVAL DATE:

REVISION DATE: April 2004; March 2015; July 2016

REVIEW DATE: Sept. 2017; Oct. 2019; Dec. 2020; March 2022; March 2023

Page 1 of 3

PURPOSE: To remove impacted cerumen from the auditory canal
To improve impaired hearing caused by ear wax

EQUIPMENT:

1. Ear Wash System
2. Otoscope
3. Towels to protect clothing

PROCEDURE:

1. Administer softening oil as directed by the physician prior to irrigation procedure. Irrigation procedure is performed only by the physician or trained Registered Staff (as outlined below) with a doctor's order.
2. Explain the procedure, potential risks, and desired outcomes to the resident.
3. Obtain consent for the procedure from the resident if capable and/or substitute decision maker.
4. Assist the resident to a sitting position, if possible, or in a dorsal recumbent position with the head on the edge of a pillow towards the affected side.
5. Perform hand hygiene.
6. Connect the tubing to the chamber. Match the black connector to the black return port on the side of the chamber. Match the blue connector to the blue irrigation port on the lower side of the chamber.
7. To attach the chamber to the faucet, pull down the white plastic ring on the top of the chamber, and then insert the chamber over the snap aerator on the faucet. When the chamber is positioned, release the white plastic ring. The chamber is now secure.
8. Line up the grooves on the side of the ear tip with the corresponding indentations on the handle interface. Verify that you are attaching the ear tip with the tab facing upwards. Press firmly on the ear tip until it is flush against the handle interface. You will feel a slight snap when the ear tip is in place.



HOMES AND SENIORS SERVICES

POLICY & PROCEDURE NUMBER:

DEPARTMENT: *Nursing*

SUBJECT: *Ear Irrigation*

APPROVAL DATE:

REVISION DATE: April 2004; March 2015; July 2016

REVIEW DATE: Sept. 2017; Oct. 2019; Dec. 2020; March 2022; March 2023

Page 2 of 3

9. Begin to run water through the unit by turning the hot and cold water on full power. Adjust the water exiting the bottom of the chamber until it feels close to body temperature. **NOTE: Reducing the hot or cold water will impact the pressure.**

10. Check the temperature of the irrigating water by looking at the thermal sensor while depressing the water flow actuator. If the thermal sensor is blue, the irrigating water is not warm enough. If the thermal sensor white, the water temperature is at least 90° F and the procedure may begin. You must depress the actuator on the handle for the temperature sensor to function correctly. If the water is too cold, the patient may experience vertigo and/or light-headedness.
NOTE: Staff must verify that the thermal indicator is white before proceeding with the irrigation.

11. To irrigate the ear, grasp the patient's pinna. Pull up and back. While maintaining tension on the pinna, insert the tip of the handle into the ear to create a seal. Tilt the handle so the ear tip is directed away from the longitudinal axis of the ear canal and toward any point on the wall of the ear canal. Squeeze the actuator on the handle and slowly rotate the tip. By adjusting how much force you push on the actuator, some control over the flow rate is attained.

12. It is important to aim the stream of water away from the longitudinal axis of the ear canal and toward the ear canal walls by tilting and rotating the handle during the irrigation. Flood the ear with water. The suction return system will return the discharge away from the ear.

13. During the irrigation, provide inquiries about resident comfort to provide confidence. Periodically stop irrigation. View the ear canal (using an otoscope) to check on progress. (Wax evacuation is not always evident watching the ear tip/suction tubing.)

14. If the temperature of the irrigating water becomes too hot, the unit will restrict the flow to the handle, while continuing to discharge out the bottom of the unit. For the unit to reset, bring the water temperature down to a safe level by adjusting the knobs on the faucet until the water cools sufficiently.

15. Release the actuator and keep the ear tip in the canal for 5 to 10 seconds to vacuum any residual irrigating water. **NOTE: The procedure typically takes 30 seconds to 5**



HOMES AND SENIORS SERVICES

POLICY & PROCEDURE NUMBER:

DEPARTMENT: *Nursing*

SUBJECT: *Ear Irrigation*

APPROVAL DATE:

REVISION DATE: April 2004; March 2015; July 2016

REVIEW DATE: Sept. 2017; Oct. 2019; Dec. 2020; March 2022; March 2023

Page 3 of 3

minutes depending on the type of cerumen and whether or not a wax softening agent is used. In severe cases, the process could take longer.

16. When the irrigation is complete, grasp the tab located on the disposable ear tip and pull the ear tip off of the handle with a downward motion. Please place in an appropriate receptacle.

If there is no water flow out of the ear tip and the actuator is depressed, check to see if the hot water shut-off has tripped by running cold water through the unit. This should restore water flow to the handle. Ear tips are intended for single use only. Discard after use.

17. Dry external canal and ear. Assist the resident to a comfortable position.
18. Perform hand hygiene.
19. Document procedure in the residents chart. Include pertinent observations such as time of procedure, which ear(s) were irrigated, amount and type of wax removed, any bleeding or pain experienced, and condition of the resident post procedure i.e. Hearing acuity improved.

Note:

1. Ear irrigation is usually performed by a physician. Nurses are required to assist the physician in performing the procedure. Nurses may irrigate ears providing they have:
 - a) Received proper instructions and in-service from the Medical Director, Manager of Resident Care, or a trained Registered Nurse
 - b) Authorization to perform special treatment form which must be completed by the Medical Director and Manager of Resident Care
 - c) Form becomes part of the Nurses Employment Record
2. Irrigation can only be performed after the resident is seen by a physician and on his/her orders.

References:

WelchAllyn Ear Wash System Product Guide