Module 3 summary

Earwax Management

What earwax is, how it affects hearing and hearing aids, what care staff can safely do, and when to get a professional ear examination. This module teaches observation and escalation only, not wax removal.

Key points

- Earwax is normal and protects the ear. Most people never need it removed.
- Older people and hearing aid users are more likely to have wax build up.
- Possible signs include muffled hearing, a blocked feeling, hearing aids whistling or sounding weak, and wax filters blocking quickly. Other conditions can cause the same signs.
- Care staff can look at the outer ear, clean the outer ear with a damp cloth, keep hearing aids clean, and record and report concerns.
- Never put anything in the ear canal. No cotton buds, fingers, instruments, ear candles or syringes. Do not try to remove wax.
- Use ear drops only on the advice of a GP, nurse, pharmacist or audiologist, and in line with the care plan and your medicines policy.
- Earwax should only be removed by a trained professional, for example by microsuction or electronic irrigation. NICE advises against manual syringing.
- Never assume sudden hearing loss is caused by wax. It needs same-day medical advice.

Get help when

- Sudden hearing loss or sudden worsening in one or both ears – contact the GP or NHS 111 the same day. Do not assume it is wax.
- Ear pain, discharge, bleeding, swelling, a high temperature or dizziness – contact the GP the same day.
- Hearing loss with face drooping, weakness, slurred speech or sudden confusion – call 999.
- Suspected wax affecting hearing or hearing aids, with none of the warning signs – ask the GP, practice nurse or audiology service for an ear examination.

In an emergency call 999. For urgent advice contact the GP or NHS 111. Always follow your care home's policies and the resident's care plan.

Clinical review: pending — drafted November 2026 from the references listed. Awaiting review by a qualified audiologist.

Full module, quizzes and certificate: https://carehomehearing.org/training/earwax-management/