

# SHIP8 Clinical Commissioning Groups Priorities Committee

No. 33

**Policy Recommendation: Microsuction for the removal of ear wax in adults of 16 years and over**

**Date of issue: June 2018**

The committee reviewed the evidence for removal of ear wax by microsuction. It was noted that whilst microsuction is regarded by some as Gold Standard there are issues of affordability and alternative treatments represent better value. The importance of patient education regarding self-management needs to be emphasised. It was also noted that this policy would need to be promulgated widely including to Primary Care.

The Committee recommend that microsuction should be available for the following indications;

- Patients who have had an episode of acute otitis externa - up to a maximum of 3 microsuctioning procedures per year
- The tympanic membrane is obscured by wax but needs to be viewed to establish a diagnosis in high risk individuals such as people with learning disabilities and/or Down's syndrome.
- The patient has a history of unilateral hearing and there is a need for wax removal from that or the contralateral ear

Also microsuction should be offered to patients with symptoms caused by ear wax build up e.g. pain or hearing loss, if ear drops have been unsuccessful at softening the ear wax and irrigation is contraindicated i.e. If one or more of the following criteria is met;

- Previously undergone ear surgery other than grommet insertion that have been extruded for at least 18 months or
- Had a recent history of otalgia and / or middle ear infection in the previous 6 weeks or
- Has a retraction pocket or a cholesteatoma or
- Has a current perforation or a history of ear discharge in the past 12 months or
- Had previous complications following ear irrigation including perforation of the ear drum, severe pain, deafness or vertigo or
- Two attempts at irrigation of the ear canal in primary/community care are unsuccessful

In such cases patients should be a maximum of 2 microsuction appointments per year at no less than 6 monthly intervals

Statement Review Date: April 2023

*Notes:*

***Whilst the panel recognises the considered expert advice of NICE in their recommendation the panel also had a duty to prioritise spending of a finite resource locally and made a decision which it felt gave the most equitable and effective use of investment.***