

SOP – Safe resumption of ear microsuction in a Primary Care setting

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Ear microsuction is performed in some community settings to clear the external canal of infected material in cases of mild otitis externa.

This procedure should never be performed in the community in a patient who is suspected to be or known to be covid positive. Patients for this procedure should be carefully selected and it is recommended that referral to secondary care is appropriate if any of the precautionary measures below cannot be delivered in the community setting.

This summary document is based on the ENT UK recommendations for the safe resumption of microsuction of the ear in secondary care *A graduated return to elective ENT within the covid -19 pandemic*. We recommended that any healthcare professional working in the community planning to undertake microsuction should read the otology section of this document in full. The PDF can be seen [here](#)

It is important to note that if the ear canal is wet the tympanic membrane may not be intact and therefore the risk of viral transmission is higher as the middle ear behind the tympanic membrane can harbour Covid -19 virus. It is essential that the practitioner who performs the microsuction and the patient are protected and that the environment is safe to perform the procedure in order to limit the potential for viral transmission.

For the patient:

- A fluid repellent mask (type IIR surgical mask) – microsuction can stimulate the cough reflex

For the practitioner:

- A fluid repellent mask (type IIR surgical mask), if the ear is wet a fit tested FFP3 mask should be worn
- Plastic apron
- Eye protection in the form of visor or safety glasses (some people find a soft visor easier to use with the microscope)
- Disposable gloves
- Bare below the elbows
- Scrubs or similar clothing

For the environment /equipment

- A disposable ear speculum must be used
- Fenestrated suction must be avoided
- Microsuction should be performed in a separate room to the consultation room
- The ventilation of the room needs to be maximised
- The turnaround time for the patients is determined by the air exchanges in the room – HEPA filters can be used to speed up the exchange rate
- Filtration on the suction machine essential
- Do not use a fenestrated sucker