



Department of Nursing POLICY AND PROCEDURE

POLICY NUMBER: 240
VERSION: 1

SUBJECT: EAR MEDICATION, INSTILLING

PURPOSE:

- To treat infection or inflammation
- To soften ear wax
- To facilitate removal of a foreign body
- To produce local anesthetic effect

POLICY: After successful completion of the Orientation Medication Module, RNs and LVNs are authorized to administer medications.

EQUIPMENT:

- Prescribed ear medication
- Cotton balls
- Clean gloves
- Facial tissues or cotton-tipped swabs

PROCEDURE:

1. Verify provider's order.
2. Confirm patient identity using two identifiers.
3. Validate allergy status.
4. Check color and expiration date of medication.
5. Wash hands or use alcohol gel.
6. Follow the 6 rights of medication administration; the right time, right patient, right medication, right dose, right route, right documentation.
7. Apply gloves if drainage is present or suspected.
8. Check temperature of medication container. Eardrops should be at body temperature.

9. Position patient in a side-lying position with the affected ear facing up.
10. Straighten the ear canal:
 - a. For adult and child over 3 years, pull auricle of ear up and back.
 - b. For infant and child less than 3 years, pull auricle of ear down and back.
11. Instill prescribed number of drops; direct drops to fall against side of ear canal, not on eardrum.
12. Instruct patient to remain in side lying position to allow medication to run into ear canal. Gently massage the external opening of the ear canal with finger.
13. Clean and dry outer ear with cotton balls. If ordered, place a cotton ball or portion of a cotton ball at canal opening; do not insert cotton ball into the ear canal.
14. Instruct patient to remain in side lying position for 5-10 minutes to allow medication to run down into the ear canal.
15. If bilateral ear instillations are ordered, repeat in other ear after five to ten minutes.
16. Remove gloves and perform hand hygiene.
17. Documentation
 - a. Medication name, number of drops, ear(s) treated
 - b. Date, time and initials of nurse

NOTE:

1. Perform hand hygiene and apply clean gloves, between caring for both ears.
2. To prevent injury to the eardrum, never insert a cotton-tipped applicator into the ear canal past the point where you can see the tip.
3. After applying ear drops to soften cerumen, irrigate the ear as ordered to facilitate it's removal.
4. Be extremely careful to check the temperature of the medication. Too hot may burn the ear canal and too cold may induce vomiting, nausea, and or vertigo.

POLICY NO: 240	SUBJECT: EAR MEDICATION, INSTILLING	Page 3 of 3
--------------------------	---	--------------------

REFERENCES:

Kowalak, J., (Ed.) (2012). Lippincott's nursing procedures (6th ed.). Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

Approved By: Susan Knapp (CHIEF NURSING OFFICER I)	
Date: 11/15/2013	Original Date: 02/01/1991
Reviewed: 11/10/2014	Next Review Date: 11/15/2015
Supersedes:	