

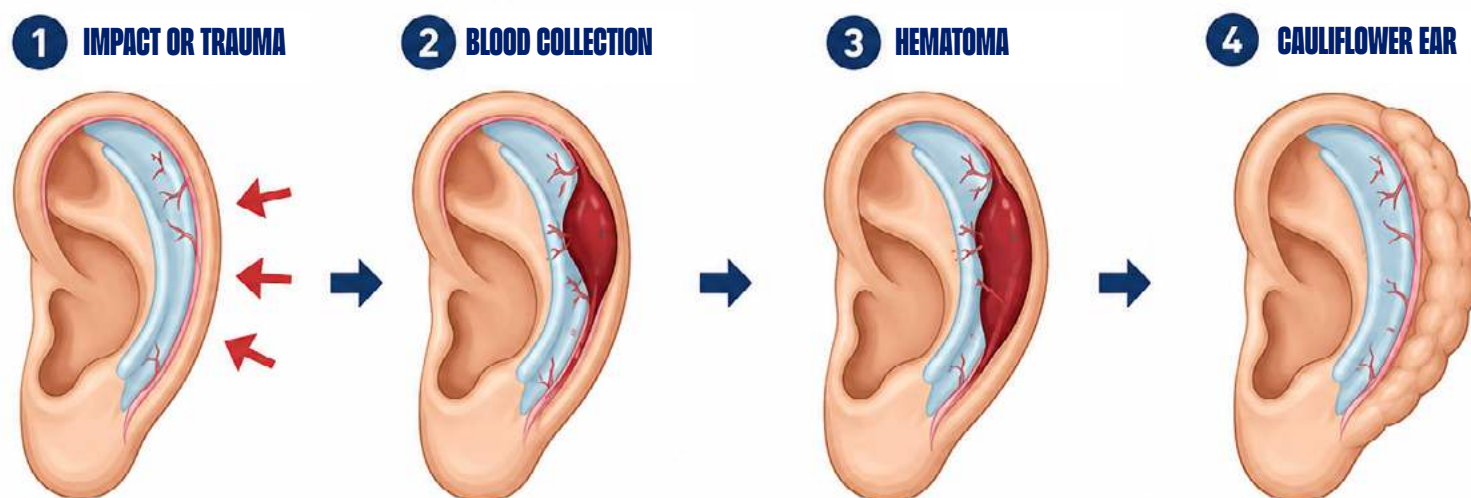
INJURY GUIDANCE: CAULIFLOWER EAR

WHAT IS IT?

A Cauliflower ear is a permanent deformity caused by an untreated ear haematoma. This is a collection of blood which forms as a result of blunt trauma to the ear, common in sports such as boxing, wrestling, rugby and judo. Permanent deformity can be easily prevented with prompt treatment.

HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?

When an ear injury occurs, the blood vessels which supply nutrients to the cartilage of the ear tear (the semi-rigid tissue which gives the ear its shape), causing internal bleeding and a build-up of blood (or haematoma) in between the cartilage and its covering (the perichondrium). As the pressure builds up from this, it effectively cuts off the circulation to the cartilage, causing it to die. The cartilage becomes very thickened and lumpy as scar tissue and new cartilage forms, looking a bit like a cauliflower on your ear. The deformity usually becomes irreversible and permanent in about 7-10 days if it is not treated (the pressure build up needs to be relieved promptly and the circulation restored).



HOW DO I TREAT IT?

Prompt treatment reduces the risk of permanent deformity. Apply ice quickly (15 mins on, 15 mins off) and seek medical care immediately (a GP or Nurse will often not be able to help). Go to A&E as soon as possible. They will often refer you to an ENT (Ear, Nose & Throat) Doctor. **THE EFFECTIVE WINDOW FOR TREATMENT IS WITHIN 24 HOURS, FOR THE BEST RESULTS WITHIN 6 HOURS OF THE INJURY OCCURRING.**

Medical treatments may include:

- Aspiration – a needle is inserted into the area to draw out the fluid with a syringe.
- Incision and Drainage – a small sterile incision is cut through the skin to drain the fluid and blood.
- Surgical Otoplasty – an operation to improve the cosmetic appearance if it is not treated in time and is left to harden, causing permanent ear damage & deformity.

If you undergo treatment quickly, you may not even develop a cauliflower ear, which is why it's best to see an A&E or ENT doctor as soon as possible. In the meantime, ice your ear to minimise pain and swelling.

You should NOT attempt to drain the haematoma yourself as it is likely to rapidly reaccumulate **and has a high risk of infection. If left untreated, Cauliflower ears can cause unsightly deformity, and narrow the entry to the ear canal significantly. This can cause hearing problems and interfere with your ability to wear earbuds or headphones.**

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO RECOVER?

After the fluid has been drained, compression will be applied. This may be in the form of a dressing, splint, magnets or discs. The compression is crucial to ensure the fluid doesn't reaccumulate and the ear heals in its natural shape. The pocket created by the haematoma will rapidly refill if compression is not applied. The Doctor will tell you how long to keep the pressure on for – this will depend on the severity of the injury and can range from 48 hours to a week. You can resume training after the pressure dressing is removed, but you must wear a headguard during training to protect it until the ear is pain free and fully healed. The Doctor will tell you when you can recommence competitive Judo.

RECOGNISE A HAEMATOMA



ICE IT QUICKLY



A&E URGENTLY FOR DRAINAGE