



Caring for a Child with a Middle Ear Infection (Otitis Media)

What We Know About Ear Infections

An otitis media is an infection of the middle ear. The middle ear is the area inside the ear that you cannot see (refer to the picture below).

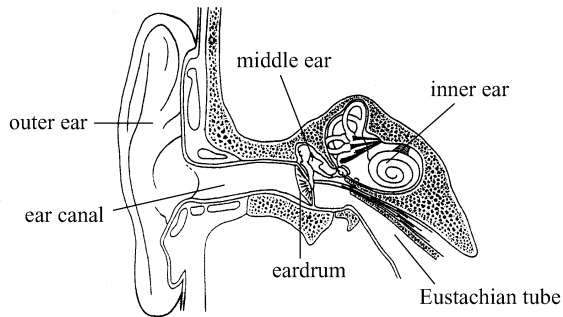
The infection is caused by bacteria (germs) or viruses that travel up the tube that connects the throat and the ears (the Eustachian tube).

An ear infection can happen at any age but is most common in children younger than 5 years due to a short Eustachian tube.

It can also happen at any time of the year but is most common in the winter.

Frequent ear infections can cause permanent hearing damage if they are not treated properly. Your child may not hear as well for a few weeks after an ear infection, but hearing will return with proper treatment.

Picture of the Middle Ear



Signs and Symptoms

- Pulling ears or shaking head
- Complaints of ear pain or not hearing well
- Fluid draining from ears
- Runny nose from a cold or allergy
- Fever

- Cranky
- Cough or sore throat
- Not eating as usual
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Have difficulty sleeping

A child may have an infection but have none of these symptoms.

What to Do

Your child will receive antibiotics for the ear infection **ONLY** if the signs/symptoms suggest that it is being caused by a bacterium such as:

- Moderate to severe illness with temperature higher than 39C
- Your child has severe pain
- The condition has not improved in 48-72 hours
- The ear canal has new fluid

If your child does not have these symptoms the ear infection is likely caused by a virus and does not require antibiotics.

1. If you have to give an antibiotic-
Give your child this antibiotic:

The antibiotic kills the bacteria that caused the infection. Start today.

Give it: _____ times a day for the next _____ days **(6 months to 2 years give for 10 days, older than 2 years give for 5 days)**



The antibiotic will take up to **48 hours** to start working. Give it until it is all gone, **even if your child is feeling better.**

2. Treat your child's pain and fever with acetaminophen (®Tylenol/®Tempra) or Ibuprofen (®Advil/®Motrin). Use Ibuprofen only if your child is drinking well. This will be the **ONLY** treatment required if the ear infection is felt to be viral.

At your child's present weight, give:
_____mg of acetaminophen every four hours as needed OR

_____mg of Ibuprofen every six hours as needed.

Do not give Aspirin or ASA!

3. Do not put anything in your child's ears. Use a cloth to wash the outer area of the ear if needed.
4. See your family doctor in _____ to make sure that your child's infection is all gone.
5. If the ear starts to leak fluid, it means that a build-up of pressure inside the ear has broken the ear drum. If this happens to your child, keep giving antibiotics if they were prescribed. If your child was not prescribed antibiotics, he/she should be seen by a doctor as antibiotics will be needed.

When to Get Help

Get help if:

- Your child is not better after 48 hours of treatment.

Getting Help

Call any of the following:

- Your child's doctor
- Your local hospital or Nursing Station
- Health Links – Info Santé at **788-8200** (toll free 1-888-315-9257)

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