

# Ear Infection

Middle ear infections (acute otitis media) are among the most common childhood illnesses. Children will commonly develop fluid in the middle ear when they have colds, allergies or upper respiratory infections. Viruses and bacteria can infect this fluid after several days. This leads to pain and swelling which is responsible for the symptoms of ear infections.

Symptoms of ear infections include pain, difficulty sleeping, poor appetite and possibly fever. Children may also have hearing loss but this is often difficult to detect. Ear pain alone may also be due to other causes such as toothache or sore throat.

Treatment of ear infections may require antibiotics. Many ear infections are caused by viruses and will resolve on their own. Your doctor will help to decide whether an antibiotic is appropriate. If an antibiotic is prescribed, be careful to take it for the full duration as prescribed. Acetaminophen and ibuprofen will help with pain as will ear drops if indicated by your doctor.

Factors that make an ear infection more likely to develop are:

- Infants and children less than 3 years old
- Family history of frequent ear infections
- Child care setting
- Smoking in the home
- Bottle-propping

Factors that improve the chances of not developing an ear infection are:

- Breastfeeding
- Remove smoke from the home
- Bottle feed in an upright position
- Keep your child up to date on immunizations

When to call:

- If your child develops a high fever greater than 102°
- If your child appears ill or has drainage from his ear
- Symptoms don't resolve in 2-3 days or symptoms worsen



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