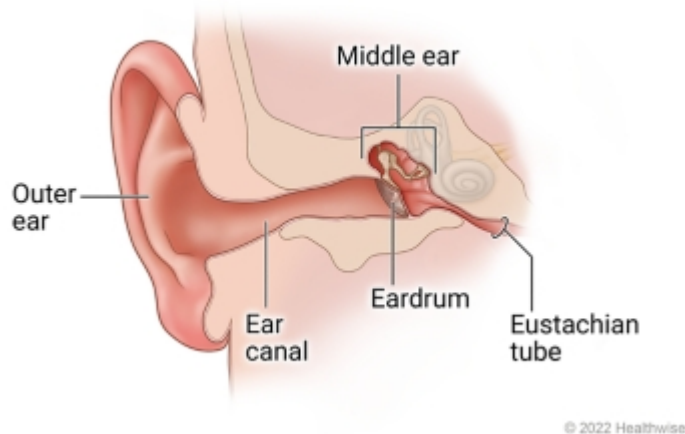


Ear Infections (Otitis Media) in Children: Care Instructions



Overview

A frequent kind of ear infection in children is called otitis media. This is an infection in the middle ear, behind the eardrum. It usually starts with a cold. Ear infections can hurt a lot. Children with ear infections often fuss and cry, pull at their ears, and sleep poorly. Older children will often tell you that their ear hurts.

Most children will have at least one ear infection. Fortunately, children usually outgrow them, often about the time they enter grade school.

Your doctor may prescribe antibiotics to treat ear infections. Antibiotics aren't always needed, especially in older children who aren't very sick. Your doctor will discuss treatment with you based on your child and the symptoms. Regular doses of pain medicine are the best way to reduce fever and help your child feel better.

Follow-up care is a key part of your child's treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if your child is having problems. It's also a good idea to know your child's test results and keep a list of the medicines your child takes.

How can you care for your child at home?

- Give your child acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) for fever, pain, or fussiness. Be safe with medicines. Read and follow all instructions on the label. Do not give aspirin to anyone younger than 20. It has been linked to Reye syndrome, a serious illness.
- If the doctor prescribed antibiotics for your child, give them as directed. Do not stop using them just because your child feels better. Your child needs to take the full course of antibiotics.
- Place a warm washcloth on your child's ear for pain.
- Encourage rest. Resting will help the body fight the infection. Arrange for quiet play activities.

When should you call for help?



Call 911 anytime you think your child may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- Your child is confused, does not know where he or she is, or is extremely sleepy or hard to wake up.

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- Your child seems to be getting much sicker.
- Your child has a new or higher fever.
- Your child's ear pain is getting worse.
- Your child has redness or swelling around or behind the ear.

Watch closely for changes in your child's health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- Your child has new or worse discharge from the ear.
- Your child is not getting better after 2 days (48 hours).
- Your child has any new symptoms, such as hearing problems after the ear infection has cleared.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/PatientEd>

Enter **J159** in the search box to learn more about "**Ear Infections (Otitis Media) in Children: Care Instructions**".

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