

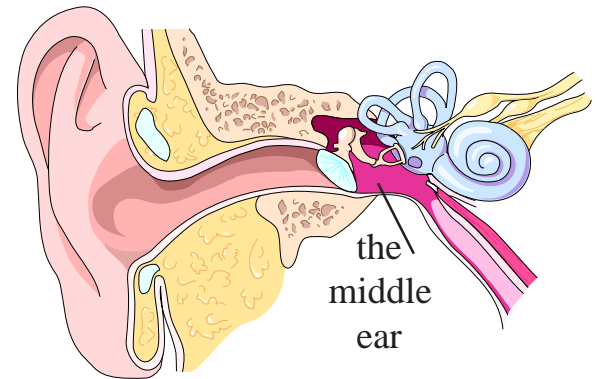
About Otitis Media (Middle Ear Infection)



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What is otitis media?

It is an inflammation behind the ear drum, in the middle ear. This inflammation can happen as a result of an infection. It is a common problem in babies and children, but does also happen in adults.



What are the causes of otitis media?

In a normal, healthy ear, there are no germs in the middle ear. Germs may get behind the ear drum and cause an infection. This can happen when:

- The ear drum is torn, letting germs into the space behind it.
- A person has a cold and the germs are forced up the Eustachian Tubes (the tube between the throat and the ears), and into the middle ear by
 - The nose being stopped up.
 - Hard coughing.
 - Hard sneezing with the mouth shut.
 - Blowing the nose while keeping the mouth shut.

What are the symptoms of otitis media?

- Ear pain
- Fever, which is usually low but can get up to 104° Fahrenheit (40° Celsius) or 105° Fahrenheit (40.6° Celsius).
- Ear ache. A baby with an ear ache may pull or slap at it's ears.
- Drainage from the ear.
- Trouble hearing.
- A feeling of fullness or pressure in the ear.
- Feeling dizzy, losing balance.
- Feeling cranky. A baby may fuss and cry a lot.
- Nausea (upset stomach), vomiting and diarrhea (loose stools).

(over)

What can happen if the infection is not cleared up?

- If the ear drum is not already torn, it may tear.
- A loss of hearing which may not clear up or go away.
- Pus draining from the ears.
- A bad infection in the throat or sinuses.
- The pain can get worse.

How should I take care of otitis media?

- Take, or give your child, all of the medicine that your health care provider has ordered.
 - Don't stop taking it until it is all gone (usually 10 days).
 - The infection may come back if you stop the medicine before it is all gone, even if the symptoms are better.
 - Call your health care provider if you have any questions about the medicine.



- Check temperature. Use a thermometer - never rely on touch or feel.



- If there is a fever, give acetaminophen (Tylenol, Tempra, etc.). For a child, use drops or liquid. Follow the instructions on the bottle. You may also give a sponge bath for 30 minutes with water at room temperature. Check the fever again to see if it has come down. If it is still more than 104° Fahrenheit (40° Celsius), give another sponge bath. Repeat the bath once an hour if the fever goes back up.



- Drink, or give your child plenty of liquids such as water and ginger ale.



- Keep the ear clean. Use only a clean wash-cloth wrapped around your finger. Do not use Q-tips or anything else.
- Do not sneeze or blow with the mouth shut. Do not blow hard.
- Keep ears dry. Do not swim, or allow the child to swim, or get water in the ears when bathing or showering till your health care provider says it is OK.
- Keep all follow-up clinic appointments.

What other treatments may be needed?

- The doctor may want to do an operation to cut the ear drum, put tubes in the ears, or to take out adenoids and/or tonsils if needed.

**If the infection is not better in 2 - 4 days, or is worse,
go back to see your health care provider.**