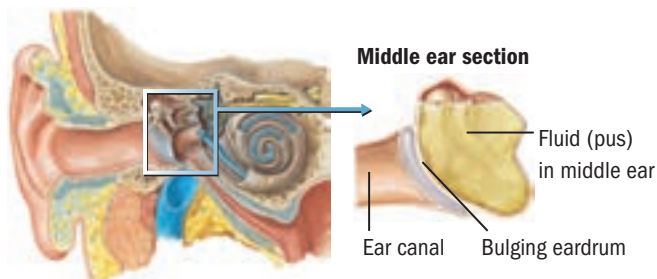


CARING FOR YOUR CHILD WITH AN EARACHE



Earaches, called otitis media, are infections in the middle ear. They affect people of any age but are most common in babies and children.



Infection occurs when germs causing colds, sore throats, and flu spread and cause inflammation of the eardrum and area around it.

Symptoms include sleeping problems, fever, and irritability.



Your health care provider will look into your child's ear with a special tool called an otoscope.

What Is an Earache?

An earache, called otitis media, is an infection in the middle ear (between the eardrum and auditory tube, which links the middle ear to the back of the nose). This area contains nerves and small bones for hearing. Earaches can affect people of any age but are most common in babies and children. Three fourths of children get earaches. Infection occurs when germs causing colds, sore throats, and flu spread and cause inflammation (irritation, swelling, redness) of the eardrum and area around it.

What Causes an Earache?

Causes include viruses, bacteria, allergies, and rupture of the eardrum. Allergies cause blockage of sinuses and eustachian tubes.

What Are the Symptoms of an Earache?

Usual symptoms or behaviors include fever, sleeping problems, irritability, pulling on the ears, fluid coming out of ears, loss of hearing and balance, headache, waking in the middle of the night crying in severe pain, and dizziness.

How Is an Earache Diagnosed?

The health care provider will look into the child's ear with a special tool called an otoscope. This tool lets the health care provider see signs of inflammation in the middle ear. A hearing test may also be done to see if the hearing has been affected.

CARING FOR YOUR CHILD WITH AN EARACHE



Treatments include antibiotics, pain relievers (such as acetaminophen), and eardrops. If a virus (such as the cold or flu virus) is the cause, antibiotics cannot help. To avoid Reye's syndrome, don't give aspirin to children with a virus.



Drinking more fluids is important to help to thin the secretions.



Don't let your child swim until the infection clears.

Call your health care provider if your child has the earache for more than 2 days after treatment starts.



How Is an Earache Treated?

The health care provider may prescribe an oral antibiotic that kills bacteria (such as penicillin) and pain relievers (such as acetaminophen). Eardrops containing an antibiotic and maybe steroids to reduce swelling may also be used. If a virus (such as the cold or flu virus) is the cause, antibiotics cannot help. Watchful waiting may be proper for some earaches.

Resting is suggested until fever and pain leave. No special diet is needed, but drinking more fluids is important to help thin secretions.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing an Earache:

- ✓ **DO** follow your doctor's advice about pain relievers and antibiotics if prescribed.
- ✓ **DO** hold babies in the sitting position while feeding.
- ✓ **DO** keep a follow-up appointment for the health care provider to recheck the ears.
- ✓ **DO** use nonaspirin medicines for fever and pain.
- ✓ **DO** use a heating pad or hot water bottle wrapped in a towel on the ear for pain.
- ✓ **DO** have your child drink more fluids.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if your child has the earache for more than 2 days after treatment starts.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if your child has a severe headache or fever after treatment starts.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if your child has redness or swelling behind the ear or dizziness.

- ⊗ **DON'T** let your child swim until the infection clears.
- ⊗ **DON'T** let your child be near cigarette smoke for long periods. In young children this can increase the chance of more infections.
- ⊗ **DON'T** put anything in the ear other than drops prescribed by your health care provider.
- ⊗ **DON'T** give aspirin to children, to avoid the dangerous Reye's syndrome.

FROM THE DESK OF

NOTES

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following sources:

- American Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
Tel: (703) 836-4444
Website: <http://www.entnet.org/>
- American Academy of Pediatrics
Tel: (847) 228-5005