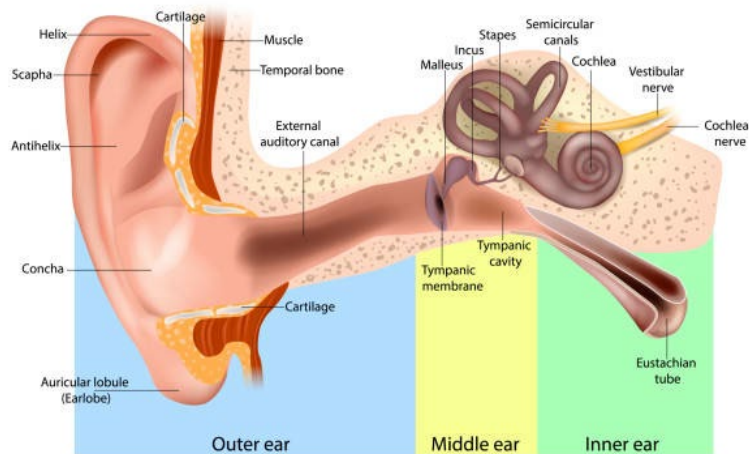


Key Points

An ear infection, also called acute otitis media is an infection in the middle ear. It usually resolves quickly with or without antibiotics. Middle ear infections in adults may mean a more serious problem. For both adults and children, fever and pain are the most common symptoms.



What Causes an Ear Infection?

The middle ear is the space behind the eardrum. If the fluid does not drain properly, viruses or bacteria can cause this space to become inflamed and infected.

Common Symptoms in Children

- Fever
- Pulling or tugging at ears
- Poor sleep
- Crying

These instructions are not intended to be all-inclusive and may not cover all possibilities. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your doctor, Telehealth Ontario (866)797-0000, or return to the Emergency Department.

Ear Infections

- Vomiting
- Fluid draining from ears
 - Some children can get a small perforation (tear/hole) in their eardrum from the high pressure in the middle ear. You may notice cloudy or yellow fluid draining from the ear. These holes usually heal in about a week. If your child has repeated infections with perforations, there is a risk of scarring on their eardrum. This may affect their hearing and should be followed up by your child's primary care provider.

How are Ear Infections Diagnosed?

The doctor will look into the ear with an otoscope (a lighted magnifying glass) and will look for signs of infection; redness, fluid, bulging of the eardrum. If what the doctor sees is concerning, or frequent ear infections are a problem, you may be sent to an Ear, Nose & Throat specialist. The specialist can take a sample of the fluid behind the eardrum and determine if the infection is caused by a virus or bacteria.

Treatment & Prevention

Without treatment, permanent hearing loss may occur.

- Antibiotics are not always needed to treat an ear infection. In healthy individuals, it is safe to wait 1 to 2 days to see if the symptoms get better on their own.
- If you are given a prescription for antibiotics, it is important to take the medication as prescribed **until it is finished**, even if your symptoms go away.
- Treat the pain with Acetaminophen (Tylenol® or Tempra® can be used for a child) or Ibuprofen (Advil® or Motrin®), use only as directed on packaging or as directed by your health care provider.
- Keep your home smoke-free as this decreases the chances of ear infections.
- If the doctor determines that there is a hole in the eardrum, swimming should be avoided for at least 1 week, until it has healed.
- Flying may be uncomfortable with an ear infection and increases the chance that the

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Ear Infections

eardrum can perforate. This is due to the pressure changes; drinking or swallowing can help with this.

- Washing your hands often with soap and water can help prevent ear infections.
- Regular vaccinations may also help prevent ear infections.

See your primary care provider or return to Emergency Department if:

- You are not feeling better after 2-3 days
- If you develop neck pain/stiffness
- If you become more lethargic



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