

Middle Ear Infection

(Otitis Media)

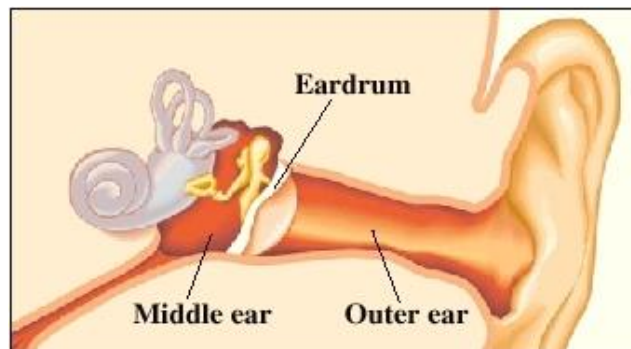
What is otitis media?

A middle ear infection is called otitis media. Ear infections are caused by bacteria or a virus.

Most children will have an ear infection by the time they start school.

What are the symptoms?

- Pain in one or both ears.
- Fever.
- Trouble sleeping at night.
- Crabby or fussy.
- Pulling at the ear.
- Poor feeding or loss of appetite.



Some children are more likely to get an ear infection when they have a cold. Viruses cause colds. Symptoms of a cold may include runny nose or stuffy nose, fever, watery eyes. When your child has a cold they may be fussy and have trouble sleeping.

How is it treated?

Most ear infections will improve in two or three days without medicine. Antibiotics are medicines used for bacterial infections. They may not help your child feel better faster. **They will not help viral infections.** There are three ways to treat an ear infection.

Antibiotics. If your child has a bacterial infection an antibiotic will be started right away. You will be told how and when to give this medicine. It may take two to three days before your child starts to feel better.

Watchful waiting with prescription. It may be safe to wait two or three days before using an antibiotic, if there are no symptoms of pain or fever. You will be given a prescription for an antibiotic. You can use it if your child is not improving. In the meantime, you can give your child over the counter medicine for pain and fever. The doctor or nurse will tell you what medicine to use.

Watchful waiting with follow-up. Your child may improve without antibiotics. Give your child Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or Ibuprofen (Motrin® or Advil®) for pain or fever. Follow-up with your child's doctor in a few weeks to make sure the infection is better.

Remember: Cold symptoms that are caused by a virus will not get better with antibiotics. Antibiotics only work if bacteria are causing your child's infection.

Special Information

- Give the medicine exactly as it is ordered. Give the medicine until it is all gone, even if your child feels better.
- Give your child Acetaminophen (Tylenol®), Ibuprofen (Motrin® or Advil®) for pain or fever.
- Antibiotics can cause mild diarrhea. **Do not stop giving your child the medicine if this happens.** It should get better after 4 days of being on the medicine. Call your doctor if the diarrhea worsens or does not stop.

Follow-up

Your child should be seen by their health care provider in 2 to 3 weeks. They will want to make sure the ear infection is gone. Call to make an appointment. This is very important. Frequent ear infections can lead to hearing loss and poor speech.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child:

- Is not feeling better in two to three days.
- Is not drinking water or juice.
- Seems to be getting sicker.
- Has moderate to severe diarrhea.
- Has yellow, white, or green drainage or blood coming from the ear.
- Has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This sheet was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.