

## ear infection

Ear infections are very common in children 6 months to 3 years of age. Infections occur either in:

- The middle ear (The space behind the ear drum that you cannot see). Infection in the middle ear is called otitis media.
- The outer ear (the part in front of the ear drum). Infection in the outer ear is called otitis externa.

### HOW CAN I TELL IF MY CHILD HAS AN EAR INFECTION?

A child with an ear infection may:

- have pain in the ear (this pain may come and go);
- tug or pull at their ear(s);
- be irritable – child may scream or cry a lot or be cranky;
- have fever (temperature over 38.0 Degrees Celsius or 100.4 Degrees Fahrenheit);
- have trouble hearing;
- have trouble sleeping; or
- have drainage of pus or blood (not wax) from the ear.
- This may mean that the ear drum has burst. See your doctor immediately.

### HOW DID MY CHILD GET AN EAR INFECTION?

#### Middle Ear Infections

- Germs that cause colds or sore throats can travel up the small tube that connects the throat and the ear.
- Children may be a higher risk if they:
  - Continue to use a soother past 10 months of age
  - Are exposed to cigarette smoke,
  - Attend a daycare centre,
  - Are exposed to indoor pets, or
  - Lay flat while drinking their bottle or have their bottle propped

#### Outer Ear Infections

- Germs found in water that children swim in can get in the ear canal and infect it (“Swimmers Ear”).

- Poking something in the ear (small toys, Q-tips, pencil) can injure the ear canal and let in germs causing infection.

Your doctor can tell if there is an infection by looking into the ears. It is important to get treatment for a middle ear infection to prevent more serious infection or hearing loss from occurring.

### WHAT CAN I DO FOR MY CHILD WITH AN EARACHE?

- Visit your doctor, or if your child appears very ill, go to the nearest emergency department.
- Encourage your child to drink fluids.
- To help your child feel more comfortable:
- Give acetaminophen (Tylenol™, Tempra™, Panadol™). Follow directions on the bottle or those given by your doctor, for the right amount and how often you may repeat it.
- Try to keep your child in an upright position (lying down flat may make ears hurt more).
- Usually antibiotics are prescribed by your doctor to treat the infection. Children begin to feel better within a few days after starting this medicine. Be sure to give the antibiotic in the right amount. At the right time, until it is completely finished, unless otherwise advised by your doctor.

### SAFETY TIPS

Keep medicine in a child resistant container and locked up. Do not give aspirin products (acetylsalicylic acid, ASA) as they can increase the risk of Reyes Syndrome, a serious condition that can damage the liver and brain.

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# ear infection *(continued)*

## WHAT CAN I DO TO LESSEN THE CHANCE OF MY CHILD HAVING EAR INFECTIONS?

- Breastfeeding helps to protect babies from infections
- If bottle feeding, hold your baby's head up during feedings. DO NOT Lay the baby down flat or prop the bottle.
- Provide plenty of rest and fluids when your child has a cold.
- Teach your child not to put anything into the ears.
- If soothers are used they should be washed often in hot soapy water.

## RETURN TO YOUR DOCTOR IF:

The fever lasts more than 2 days after starting antibiotics; or The earache does not improve. It is important to return to your doctor for follow-up if asked.

## IF I HAVE MORE QUESTIONS, WHO CAN I CALL?

Consult your doctor, or health care professional.



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