



Patient Information : Ear infection (for parents and children)



Cork Emergency Medicine

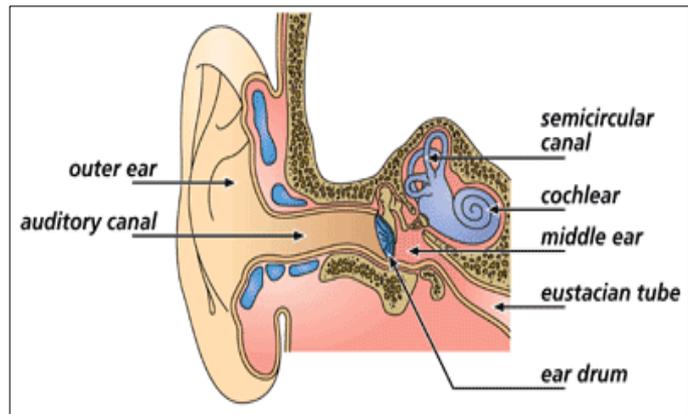
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What is 'otitis media'?

Otitis media is a middle ear infection (behind the ear drum). It is common in small children.

Babies and young children get more middle-ear infections than older children because the tubes connecting the middle ear to the throat (the Eustachian tubes) are shorter and get blocked easier.

This often happens as part of a virus infection (eg common cold). It is normal to have some fluid in the middle ear, which usually drains down into the throat. When the Eustachian tube is blocked, this fluid doesn't drain so well.



Signs and symptoms

Babies and toddlers may suffer intense ear pain.

- Because of the pain, toddlers can become extremely irritable and hard to deal with.
- They may have more tantrums, vomit or lose interest in eating or have trouble hearing.
- Sometimes pus will break through the eardrum so you see a thick yellow discharge from the ear. When this happens children often feel better as the painful pressure from the fluid inside the ear is gone. The burst eardrum usually heals without treatment.
- Usually they have a fever - sometimes a fever is the *only* symptom.

Care at home

- If your child is in pain give them a pain-reliever such as Paracetamol or Neurofen.
- If you think your child may have an ear infection see your doctor. Many cases of middle ear infection in children clear up on their own, without antibiotics, over a few days.
- In some cases a short course of antibiotics may be prescribed, particularly if the child is very young or very unwell.

Antibiotics are not required every time the doctor notices a child has an ear infection. They may cause side-effects. Ask the doctor if antibiotics are really necessary.

Following an ear infection, children may have some fluid in the middle ear for a few weeks. You may notice your child has some trouble hearing during this time. The fluid will usually





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clear up over a couple of months. If your child continues to be irritable or does not seem to be hearing well, see your doctor.

If you are concerned, please contact the
Emergency Department you first attended:

**Mercy University
Hospital**
(021) 4271971

**M-UCC at
SMHC (St.
Mary's Health
Campus)**
(021) 4926900

CUH
(021) 4920200

**Mallow General
Hospital**
(022) 21251

**Bantry General
Hospital**
(027) 52900

