

Ear infection in children

What are ear infections?

Middle ear infections (Acute Otitis Media) are a very common illness. It is often caused by a virus or bacteria causing an infection in the ear leading to pain. There may also be other symptoms present. **Most cases last 3 days (but can last up to a week)** and will usually get better without antibiotics.

What should I do if my child was sent home without antibiotics?

- Consider giving paracetamol for pain or fever, or ibuprofen if old enough.
- Drink lots of fluids. Water, squash or anything else, main thing is keeping your child hydrated.

Why was my child not given antibiotics?

- Many ear infections are caused by viruses, viruses are not affected by antibiotics.
- Antibiotics make little difference to how long symptoms last, or the number of people whose symptoms improve.
- Using antibiotics when not needed can make future infections harder to treat as bacteria become less affected by them. They can also have side effects like feeling sick and diarrhoea.

When should I use my backup prescription?

- You should use prescription if there is no improvement in 3 days, or if symptoms get worse.

What to look out for at home?

Head to A&E
or call 999



If your child has any of the following:

- Is going blue around the lips
- Has pauses in their breathing or breaths in an abnormal pattern
- Too breathless to talk / eat or drink
- Becomes pale, mottled, and feels cold to touch
- Has a fit / seizure
- Becomes unable to settle even with distraction and attention or very difficult to wake
- Develops a rash that does not disappear with pressure (the 'Glass Test')

Contact a nurse
or doctor
today



If your child has any of the following:

- Has pus coming out of ear
- A swelling, redness or pain behind the ear
- Becomes dizzy or losing their balance
- Is becoming drowsy
- Starts complaining of a severe headache, neck stiffness, or uncomfortable with bright lights
- Having breathing problems or voice changes
- Seems dehydrated (e.g. dry mouth, sunken eyes, drowsy, or peeing less than normal)
- Is less than 3 months with a fever > 38°C, or 3-6 months with a fever >39°C
- Is still having fevers above 38°C for more than 5 days
- Is getting worse or making you worried

Sources of information

For more information visit:

<https://patient.info/ears-nose-throat-mouth/earache-ear-pain/ear-infection-otitis-media>

Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team – Tel: 0300 131 4731 (direct dial) or by email at: esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net

Hand hygiene

The Trust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

If you require any of the Trust leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department.

Tel: 0300 131 4434 Email: esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:

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The directorate group that have agreed this patient information leaflet:
Women and Childrens

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