

700 Children's Drive
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nationwidechildrens.org

EAR INFECTION: OTITIS MEDIA

Otitis media (oh-TIE-tis ME-dee-uh) is an infection of the middle ear. There are two types. One type is caused by germs (bacteria or viruses) that grow and cause pus to form behind the eardrum. This type is usually very painful.

The second type occurs when the tube leading from the throat to the middle ear (eustachian tube) is blocked or not working correctly. Mucus builds up behind the eardrum. This type is not as painful.

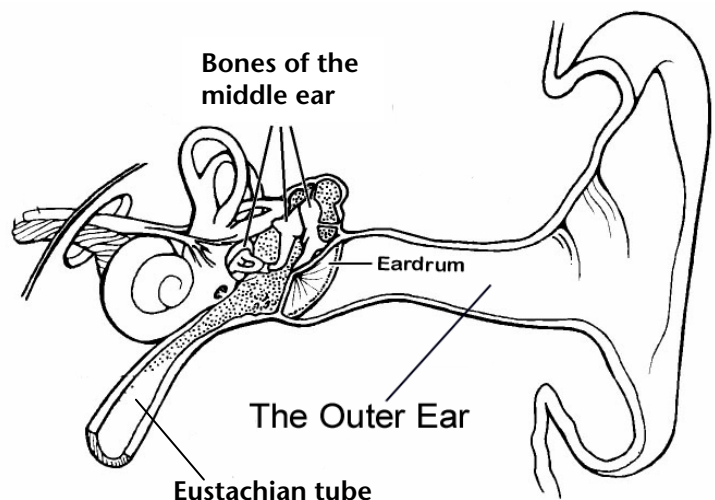
Both types of ear infections may cause hearing loss if not treated. If your child shows signs of ear infection, he or she should be seen by a doctor as soon as possible.

SIGNS OF PAINFUL OTITIS MEDIA

- Pulling or rubbing the ears or rolling the head from side to side
- Fussiness
- Crying that does not stop when the child is comforted, especially at night
- Waking up at night crying
- Fever over 101°F axillary (under the arm)
- Loss of appetite (refusing food)
- Infants will not suck because it causes pain
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

SIGNS OF LESS PAINFUL OTITIS MEDIA

- If your child is old enough to tell you, he may complain of:
 - A feeling of fullness in the ear
 - A popping feeling when swallowing
 - Dizziness
 - A feeling of motion in the ear
 - Ringing in the ears
 - You may notice that your child does not hear you when you speak.
 - Your child may turn up the volume on the TV or radio or sit very close to it.



Picture 1 The outer and middle ear.

MEDICINES

If your doctor orders medicine, make sure you **give all the medicine**, even though your child feels well. Your child needs to take all of the medicine to completely cure the ear infection.

HOW TO HELP PREVENT EAR INFECTIONS

Most children get ear infections, but there are a few things parents can do to try to prevent them:

- **Always hold your baby with his head up** during feeding time (Picture 2). Babies should not be fed by propping the bottle or while lying flat. The formula can get into the middle ear and cause an infection.
- **Do not leave a bottle in the crib** for the baby to drink at bedtime.
- If your child needs to blow his nose, have him blow *gently* with his mouth open to prevent forcing drainage into his middle ear.
- Dress your child properly in cold and rainy weather. (However, wearing a hat to protect the ears will not always prevent an ear infection.)
- Give your child healthy foods and liquids instead of junk food.
- Make sure your child gets enough sleep.
- Make sure his immunizations are up to date.
- Keep your child away from cigarette smoke. Do not smoke or allow any smoking in your home or car.



Picture 2 Hold your baby upright during feeding time.

FOLLOW-UP APPOINTMENTS

After your child has taken the medicine your doctor will want to check your child's ears again. Make an appointment with your child's doctor in 2 weeks to be checked again.

If you need a doctor for your child, call the Nationwide Children's Hospital Referral and Information Line at (614) 722-KIDS.