

Kids and Ear Infections

Two kinds of germs cause ear infections: viruses and bacteria. Middle ear infections are the most common type of infections caused by bacteria in children. The middle ear is the inside part of the ear behind the eardrum. An ear infection develops when fluid in the middle ear gets infected by bacteria.

Not all ear pain is from a bacterial infection. Ear pain may also be caused by:

- infection caused by a virus
- a blockage in the ear canal
- pressure or fluid in the middle ear
- jaw or throat problems

Over half of ear infections go away on their own. As a result, doctors do not always treat an ear infection immediately with antibiotics.

Antibiotics cannot make your child's pain better right away. It takes a day or two for them to work. Whether or not your doctor prescribes an antibiotic, there are things you can do to make your child more comfortable.

A child with an ear infection **can** go to childcare if he or she is feeling well enough to participate.

Signs that your child may have an ear infection:

- ear pain
- trouble hearing
- fever
- crankiness or irritability
- liquid draining from the ear



Your doctor must examine your child's ears to diagnose an infection. He or she will prescribe an antibiotic only if there are signs of a bacterial infection.

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What your doctor will do:

- Prescribe an antibiotic **only** if there are signs of a bacterial infection.
- Usually prescribe amoxicillin, unless your child is allergic to it.

If your doctor prescribes an antibiotic:

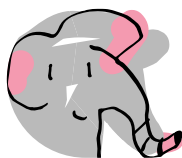
- Make sure your child takes all the medicine as directed, even after he or she feels better.
- Stop the medicine **right away** and call your doctor if your child gets a rash while taking the antibiotic. Your child may be allergic to the medicine.
- Never give your child leftover antibiotics.

What you can do to help your child feel better:

- Give acetaminophen (like Tylenol) or ibuprofen (like Advil or Motrin) for pain and fever as directed by your doctor or nurse.
- Raise your child's head to help the pain. If your child is older than two, make sure he or she has plenty of pillows under the head.
- Keep your child away from cigarette smoke.

After an ear infection

The doctor may recommend a follow-up visit in 4 to 6 weeks to re-check the ears. Antibiotics do not get rid of fluid in the ear. After the infection is gone, it may take 1–3 months for the fluid to disappear. Your child will not have any pain, but the fluid may cause the ears to feel blocked. This problem usually clears up when the fluid is gone.



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