

## Fact sheet No.11



## Easy Read

# Ear infection



This fact sheet helps you to know what's 'normal' and what you can expect to happen if your child gets an ear infection.



It also tells you when you should become concerned and see your doctor.

## What is an ear infection?

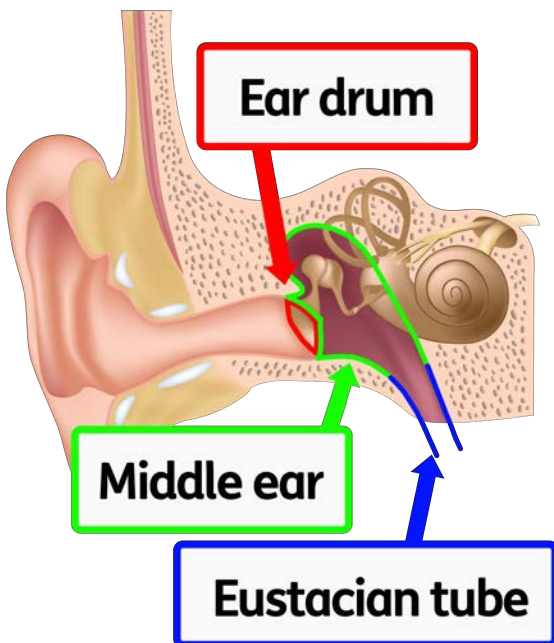
Inside your ear is the ear drum.

Behind the ear drum is a small space that's usually filled with air.

It's called the middle ear.

To let air in and out, a small tube called the Eustachian tube connects this space to your throat.

When you get a cold - sometimes germs go up the Eustachian tube into the middle ear and cause an ear infection.



An **infection** is a type of disease.



## **How dangerous is it?**

In most children it gets better by itself without any problems.



## **How common is it?**

Ear infections are very common.

Mostly they affect small children aged between six and 18 months.



Most children have at least one middle ear infection by the time they're seven.



## **What is it like?**

Older children get an ear ache.



Younger children often pull or rub their ears.



Your child may also:

- Get a runny nose
- Have a high temperature or fever



- Be in a bad temper and easily get annoyed
- Cry



- Have difficulty sleeping



- Get a cough



- Not want to eat

## Who gets an ear ache?

Ear infections are more common in children who:



- Breathe in tobacco smoke



- Go to a nursery



- Drink bottle milk rather than breast milk

## Does my child need antibiotics?

Most children with a mild middle ear infection will not get any better with antibiotics.



Antibiotics can be useful in children younger than 2 years who have infections in both ears.

# What may happen?



Ear infections tend to come on quickly and usually last about four days.



A hole may form in the ear drum and cause infected thick fluid or pus to run out of the ear.

This usually helps the pain as it reduces the pressure on the ear drum.

# What can I do to help my child get better?



## Painkillers

You can give either paracetamol or ibuprofen if your child is unwell or upset.

Just do this to reduce body temperature.

Do not give your child paracetamol and ibuprofen at the same time unless told to do so by a health





professional.

## Keep your child cool

Avoid overdressing or underdressing your feverish child.

Keep your central heating down.



We don't recommend sponging any more.

## Drinks

Offer your child regular drinks.



If you're a breastfeeding mother, offer as many feeds as they will take.

Avoid dummies and feeding while lying flat.



## Keep a check on your child

Check your child at night in case they

get worse.

## When should I get medical help?

Most ear infections are not serious and get better by themselves.

Contact your local doctor's (GP) surgery for urgent advice if:



### **Your child has a high fever**

A body temperature over 38°C in children age 0-3 months or over 39°C in children age 3-6 months.



### **Your child is not getting better**

Your child doesn't start to improve after four days.





## **They get a leaky ear**

A liquid starts to come out of the ear.

## Other symptoms

Your child starts with other things like:



- Being sick



- Feeling dizzy



- A stiff neck



- A rash

- Slurring their speech

- They are confused



- Seizures or fits

- Not being able to stand the light  
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# Where can I find out more?



## NHS Choices

**Web:** [www.nhs.uk/conditions/otitis-media/Pages/Introduction.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/otitis-media/Pages/Introduction.aspx)

Remember that your pharmacist can also help you.