

Many Ear Infections Can Be Prevented!

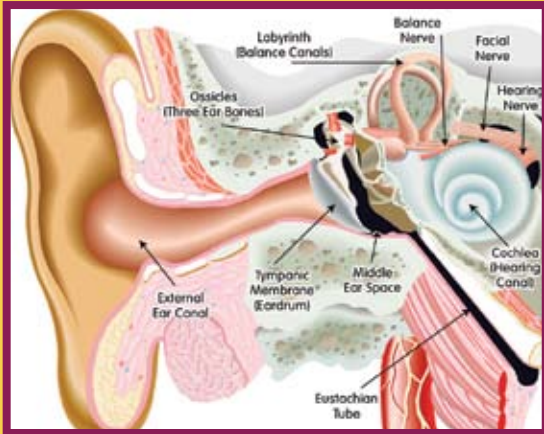


Illustration provided by Starkey

WHAT IS OTITIS MEDIA?

- Otitis Media is an inner ear infection where fluid builds up in the space behind the eardrum.
- Once fluid fills this space it can make it hard to hear.
- An infection can grow fast, making the problem worse.
- Ear infections are the most common cause of visits to a health care provider (doctor or nurse practitioner) for young children.

KNOW THE SIGNS OF AN EAR INFECTION

- they have a fever, or are fussy
- they complain of pain or pull at their ear(s)
- they feel their ear(s) are plugged up, like being on an airplane
- they have some discharge or fluid coming out of the ear(s)
- they ask “what?” and seem to have trouble hearing
- they get tired easily

But, symptoms depend on the child! Your child may have an ear infection without any of these signs.

RISK FACTORS

The chance of ear infections is higher if your child:

- is exposed to second hand smoke
- is between the ages of 0 to 3
- attends daycare
- has not been breastfed
- has not been immunized
- eats food that is not healthy
- does not wash their hands well

PREVENT EAR INFECTIONS IN YOUR CHILD

Keep your baby away from smoke and make your home and car smoke-free.

Cigarette smoke, other tobacco products and wood smoke can increase the risk of ear infections because they irritate the nose and throat.

Breastfeed your baby.

Babies who are breastfed have fewer infections than those who are fed formula, because breast milk contains many key nutrients that help develop your baby’s immune system.

Making healthy food choices for your child.

Healthy eating keeps your child’s body strong.

Making sure your child washes his/her hands often.

Hand washing prevents the spread of germs.

Making sure your child’s immunizations are up to date.

Vaccination is one of the ways to protect your child against infections and disease and helps to build a healthy immune system.

Helping your child be a bacteria fighter.

To prevent ear infections, a child needs to have a good immune system that resists infection.

WHAT TO DO WHEN AN EAR INFECTION OCCURS

- Many ear infections can be left alone and will get better in 2 to 7 days without medicines. See a health care provider.
- Antibiotics are not always needed.
- If symptoms get worse or the ear infection is not getting better on its own, it is best to see a health care provider.
- A health care provider may refer your child to an audiologist who can find out if there is hearing loss and can watch the course of infection.
- In the case that the ear infection keeps coming back, a health care provider may suggest that tympanostomy tubes are needed.

WHAT ARE TUBES?

- Tiny tubes that are surgically put into the eardrum to relieve pressure.
- Tubes help reduce ear infections and the build up of fluid, and will help hearing return to normal.

LINKS

www.tbdhu.com/audiology
www.caringforkids.cps.ca/immunization
www.tbdhu.com/factsheets/handwashing
www.cancer.ca

Thunder Bay District Health Unit
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Toll free within 807 area:
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A Healthy Child is a
“Bacteria Fighter.”

