

EARACHE AND INFECTIONS

Swimmer's ear

Swimmer's ear is caused by dry, cracked, occasionally infected skin in the ear canal. There may rarely be discharge from the ear. When the ear is moved the child usually experiences pain. Swimmer's ear is treated with medicated drops, avoidance of water in the ear, and pain medication as needed.

Middle ear infections

Middle ear infections are common in children under six. They usually follow a cold and are often accompanied by a fever in younger children. A middle ear infection can cause severe pain. When a child complains of ear pain, we advise that he be seen by us the same day.

A middle ear infection results when swelling in the nose and throat cause the Eustachian tube to get blocked. The body absorbs the trapped oxygen, and a vacuum forms in the middle ear cavity. Blood serum oozes in and becomes stagnant. Bacteria then grow in the fluid causing the infection.

An office visit is always required so that we can make a definite diagnosis by looking into the ear.

Antibiotics can be used to kill the bacteria. If there is no discharge from the ear canal Auralgan drops can be used to treat the pain. You may also use Tylenol (Acetaminophen) or Motrin (Ibuprofen) for pain relief. If a middle ear infection is not treated, the eardrum may occasionally perforate (burst). In this case, or when there are tubes in the ear, Auralgan should not be used. After a day of treatment the pain and fever are usually relieved. If antibiotic treatment is stopped before all of the fluid drains from the ear, the infection may recur, so it is important to take all the prescribed medication. A follow-up appointment to re-check the ear is suggested.

Sometimes fluid in the middle ear cavity becomes a chronic problem. Hearing loss and learning problems can result. Rarely ventilation tubes are required. They keep a hole in the eardrum to replace the function of the blocked Eustachian tube until it heals. Children with chronic nasal congestion from allergies are prone to chronic fluid accumulation and frequent middle ear infections.

Referred Pain

Another cause of ear discomfort is referred pain from the throat, teeth or neck. An office visit is required to determine what is causing the ear pain.