



AURES EAR HEALTH

GUIDANCE AND INFORMATION

OTITIS MEDIA – MIDDLE EAR INFECTION

The middle ear is the small space behind the eardrum. This space is usually filled with air.

Otitis media is an infection of the middle ear which causes inflammation and a build-up of fluid. It is often extremely painful, and you may have a fever or feel generally unwell.

An acute (sudden) otitis media will usually get better on its own and symptoms will usually clear within 3 to 7 days. A chronic (ongoing) suppurative otitis media occurs when a persistent hole to the ear drum (a perforation) leads to recurrent middle ear infections, inflammation and discharge or pus.

What are the symptoms of otitis media?

- Pain or discomfort
- Reduced hearing
- Discharge (sometimes associated with a perforation)
- High temperature (fever) above 38°C
- Perforation (a hole in the eardrum).

How is it treated?

- Generally, most middle ear infections get better on their own and do not need antibiotic treatment. Antibiotics rarely speed up recovery and often cause side effects and can lead to antibiotic resistance (reduce how well your body reacts to antibiotics).
- You may need antibiotics if the infection is severe or does not improve or worsens after 2 to 3 days.
- If there is a discharge present, the ear canal can be cleaned to clear any discharge or debris and a course of antibiotic ear drops on prescription would be recommended.
- Over the counter pain medication if required.

What causes it and how can it be prevented?

It is not possible to prevent otitis media. However, you can reduce the risk of developing an infection by:

- avoiding smoky environments
- keeping your ear canals dry when swimming, washing your hair or showering by using cotton wool at the entrance of your ear canal and smearing the cotton wool with petroleum jelly to create a waterproof seal. This is particularly important if you have a hole in your eardrum (perforation).

When should I seek further medical advice?

Seek Urgent help if:-

You need urgent help if you have any of the following symptoms:

- extreme, unmanageable pain
- pain, tenderness, swelling or redness to your mastoid bone area (the bone located behind your ear)

Call NHS 111 get an appointment and Go to your nearest Urgent and Emergency Care Centre (previously known as Accident and Emergency) or call 999.

Contact a doctor or nurse today if:-

You need to contact a doctor or nurse today if you have any of the following symptoms:

- you feel generally unwell for example, you have a high temperature or fever
- you feel your infection/symptoms have not improved or they have worsened
- you are experiencing pain which is not managed with regular pain medication

If you are not experiencing any of the above symptoms

You should:

- continue with your treatment as prescribed or instructed
- take regular pain medication if required
- attend your review appointment
- follow the advice given by your healthcare team