

Middle Ear Infections In Children



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Can I prevent a middle ear infection?

You may be able to prevent an ear infection by:

- Not smoking around your child - the smoke is bad for his/her ears
- Washing your hands often and practicing good personal hygiene, to prevent germs from spreading
- Having your child immunized to keep him/her healthy
- When bottle-feeding, try to avoid your baby lying flat. This positioning may cause the milk to run from the throat into the ear through the eustachian tube, causing an infection.

Who is more susceptible to middle ear infections?

- Children under the age of 3 years
- Individuals who get recurrent colds and upper respiratory tract infections
- Children with enlarged adenoids
- Children in day-care centres
- Individuals who suffer from allergies
- Individuals with a family history of middle ear infections
- Children who are bottle-fed rather than breast-fed
- People or children who are in regular contact with tobacco smoke.



Are ear infections common?

The medical term for a middle ear infection is Otitis Media. Otitis Media occurs in the area behind the eardrum and the inner ear, including the eustachian tube. Ear infections are very common in young children and many children may have an ear infection by the time they are 3 years of age.

How does the ear work?

Your ear is made up of three parts:

1) The outer ear

The Pinna, Ear canal and Eardrum.

The pinna captures sound and transmits it to the middle and inner ear. The ear canal is lined with hair and ear wax. This is normal and aids in the hygiene and protection of the ear. Sound waves set the eardrum into vibration, which in turn stimulates the bones in the middle ear.

2) The middle ear

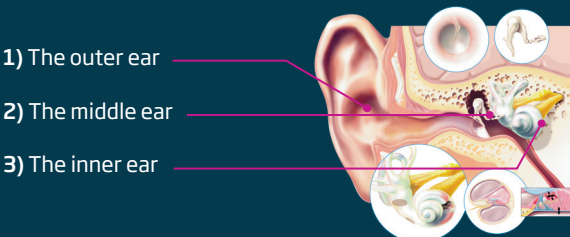
The middle ear consists of three bones:

- 1) The malleus (hammer)
- 2) The incus (anvil)
- 3) The stapes (stirrup)

These bones are connected to each other and vibrate consecutively in order for sound to be transmitted. The opening of the eustachian tube can also be found in the middle ear.

3) The inner ear

The cochlea is situated in the inner ear. It is lined with hair cells that perceive the vibration. The vibration is transmitted via the hearing nerve to the brain where we hear it as sound.



All these parts of the ear are important for hearing. Hearing may be affected if there is a problem in any part of the ear.

What causes a middle ear infection?

Otitis Media is commonly caused by a bacterial, fungal or viral infection. The most common cause is an upper respiratory tract infection such as a cold or flu.

This occurs when infections that affect the throat and nose travel to the ear. This in turn would result in the eustachian tube becoming so swollen that middle ear ventilation is impaired, contributing to the middle ear becoming inflamed and infected with pus accumulating behind the eardrum.

Signs and symptoms of a middle ear infection

- A feeling of intense pain in the ear
- Fluid draining from the middle ear that may have an unpleasant smell
- Difficulty hearing
- A feeling of fullness in the ear
- Fever, irritability or nasal congestion
- Dizziness or a change in balance
- Children may pull at their ears and cry more than normal

What to do if you suspect you or your child has an ear infection?

It would be advisable to see your family doctor or an ENT (ear, nose and throat specialist) that can prescribe antibiotics to treat the infection. An Audiologist can determine if a hearing loss is developing as a result of ongoing ear infections and can make recommendations to reduce the potential risks associated with a hearing loss.

Tips for talking to your child if he or she has a hearing loss from an ear infection:

- Make sure that you get your child's attention before you start speaking
- Make sure that you face your child as much as possible
- Speak clearly, but don't shout
- Remember to tell your child's teacher about the hearing loss so that she is aware of it

We hear with our brain. Not our ears.

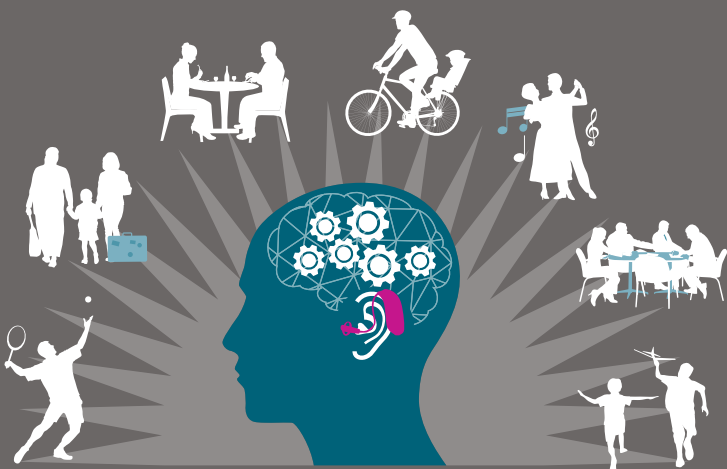
The ears receive sounds and send them to the brain that translates the sounds into meaning. Oticon hearing aids feature BrainHearing™ technology, designed to support your brain and help it make sense of sound. Our technology helps you hear better, with less effort.



Oticon
BrainHearing™
Technology

Social activities stimulate your brain

If you have a hearing loss, you will find it easier to participate in social activities if you use hearing aids. Social interaction stimulates your brain, which decreases the risk of accelerated mental decline.



How good is your hearing?

Ask yourself these 6 questions. If you answer YES to most of them, it might be a sign of hearing loss, but you need a professional hearing test to confirm it.

1. In your experience, do people around you mumble, or speak softly?
2. Do you find it difficult to follow conversations in restaurants or crowded places?
3. Do you often have to turn up the volume on your TV, radio or phone?
4. Do friends and family members complain that they have to repeat what they are saying?
5. Do you have to look at people's faces to understand what they're saying?
6. Have you noticed that everyday sounds, like the twittering of birds, footsteps or the clock ticking, are gone?



Act now!

If you would like to have your hearing tested, please contact your local hearing care professional.



For more information
call 0800 684 266
or email info-za@oticon.com

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