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## Very painful ear infection

Ear infection, or otitis media, is an infection in the middle ear that allows bacteria and virus to cause inflammation and pain. Many children have ear infection within the first year of life. Age and viruses are the most common factors of ear infection. Moreover, a clogged Eustachian tube can be a reason, as well. It forms colds that plug the tube, creating a favorable environment for germs in the middle year and causing infection. The most common symptoms of infection are soreness, redness, and swelling.Ear infections are common and most likely occur at one point in your life; however, there are effective measurements to limit the likelihood. Frequently washing your hands is vital for preventing an infection, especially after using the bathroom.Many ear infections heal within 2 or 3 days; if they don't, a doctor will prescribe a treatment depending on your condition. Antibiotics can successfully treat the infection, but you have to finish the entire amount, even if the symptoms of infections have disappeared. Ear infections can be extremely painful. They are caused by bacteria, fungi, or a virus. Symptoms include localized pain, headaches, difficulty sleeping, fever, hearing problems, tugging on the ear to relieve pressure, and even vomiting and diarrhea.In addition to medical treatments, some home remedies may help alleviate ear infection symptoms. Keep in mind that home remedies are often passed down through generations and aren't necessarily supported by science.It is possible that ear pain is caused by a tear in the eardrum. In these cases, putting anything into the ear can cause serious problems. Furthermore, these remedies are also not appropriate for people who have tubes in their ears.It is always best to see a doctor if an ear infection is suspected. The doctor may recommend some home remedies, or choose to treat the infection with pharmaceuticals. A common home remedy for earaches is a salt pack. Salt is inexpensive, and most people already have it in their home. Begin by warming the salt in a pan, over low heat, or in the microwave. Place the hot salt in a cloth bag and secure it. Lie down and place the hot bag over the affected ear for five to ten minutes. The heat helps relieve pain and swelling. To gently clear ear obstructions such as fungus or wax, some people heat olive oil or mustard oil to make ear drops. This method requires extreme care to avoid injury, and the oil should never be warmer than skin temperature. Place two to three drops of oil in the affected ear. This softens the wax enough to remove it easily with a cotton swab. Again, it is vital to only run the swab around the outermost parts of the ear to avoid puncturing the eardrum. Although scientific proof is lacking, the American Academy of Pediatrics says doing this is unlikely to be harmful. However, avoid it if there are tubes in the ears or a punctured eardrum. Garlic has antibiotic and anti-inflammatory properties and may help alleviate ear pain. Heat chopped garlic cloves with sesame oil or mustard oil. Once it turns dark, strain the oil and use once cooled. Two to four drops in each ear can offer relief. Cooking fresh cloves in water, crushing them, and adding salt in a compress can also draw out pain and reduce swelling. Do not place garlic or oil in the ear canal if you have a ruptured eardrum or have had ear tubes placed. Basil can help relieve the pain of a minor earache by spreading basil oil on and around the ear. Fresh oil can be extracted from basil leaves, or essential oil can be mixed with a carrier such as coconut oil. Mix one drop of basil oil with one teaspoon of carrier oil. Never place undiluted essential oils on the skin. Do this twice daily as a remedy to help relieve earache pain. Studies in rats show that oil of basil can cure certain types of bacterial ear infections, but studies in humans do not exist. Apple cider vinegar has anti-bacterial and anti-fungal properties but it's not clear whether it can treat an ear infection, as no studies have looked at this issue. However, some people claim benefits.Mix equal parts apple cider vinegar and water and soak a cotton ball in the mixture. Once completely soaked, use the cotton ball as an earplug and leave it in for five minutes. Remove the ball and lie down with the infected ear facing the floor, placing a towel under the ear to allow the liquid to drain. Heat is one of the best methods for instant relief from earaches. When used as an ear pack, the warmth of a hot water bottle eases pain and reduces swelling. Only leave compresses like hot water bottles on the ear for five minutes at a time, and ensure the warmth is comfortable and not painful. Onions are a common home remedy, and some people say onion juice helps ease ear infection pain. Chop an onion, microwave it for one to two minutes, cool it and strain the juice. Place three drops in the affected ear. After five to ten minutes, turn the head and let it drain out. Although unlikely to be harmful unless you have ear tubes or a ruptured eardrum, there are no studies to support the stated benefits. It's a treatment that has passed down through the generations. Tea tree is a well-known essential oil with antibacterial, anti-fungal, and antiseptic properties. Some online sites recommend creating a diluted tea tree oil eardrop to treat ear infections. Mix two or three drops of tea tree oil with olive oil or into one and a quarter cups of warm water. Lie down and add a few drops of this solution to the affected ear and let it drip along the ear canal. After one minute, sit up and let the excess solution drip out, clearing it away from the outer ear with a cloth. Despite the antibacterial and anti-fungal properties of tea tree oil, no studies have looked at whether it is effective for treating ear infections. Plus, tea tree oil can be irritating to the ear canal. If one has tubes in their ears, oil can cause clogging. Seek the advice of a physician before placing tea tree oil or any other oil in the ear canal. Though less well known than some home remedies, radishes have long been used in folk treatments. Some online sites recommend draining the oil from radishes and, sometimes, mixing it with radishes to make an ear drop. However, there's no scientific evidence to support using this remedy to treat an ear infection or reduce ear pain. Often used for cuts and grazes on the skin, hydrogen peroxide also works in the ear but must be used with caution. To break up wax in the ear, which can create a blockage or an ideal condition for a fungus to thrive, combine a 3% hydrogen peroxide solution and water. Soak a cotton ball in the mixture and squeeze a few drops into the ear. You will feel and hear bubbles popping; this is the hydrogen peroxide working on breaking down the wax. After ten minutes, tilt the head the other way and let any excess run out. This method can be repeated twice daily until the infection is gone. Ear nose and throat doctors advise flushing the ear canal with rubbing alcohol after using hydrogen peroxide. The hydrogen peroxide can leave behind moisture that creates a favorable environment for fungi. The rubbing alcohol helps dry the ear canal. Earaches can be extremely frustrating and annoying, and they are most commonly caused by ear infections. While it is true that children get the majority of ear infections, this is a condition that can affect adults as well. In many cases, an ear infection occurs during or just after the cold because the germs from the initial infection find their way to the middle ear and grow.As an ear infection begins, you will start to feel a slight earache that will build in intensity over time. For adults, the pain tends to be more tolerable at first. But for children, the onset of an ear infection can be painful and even disorientating. As the infection gets worse, children will become more irritable.A growing ear infection inevitably leads to a headache. As the headache gets worse, that is when nausea will start to occur. For more intense infections, nausea can be chronic and potentially dangerous. If a child reaches the point of nausea from an ear infection, that child should immediately be taken for emergency medical care.Infections create fevers. The symptom that can confirm that you have an ear infection is when you get a fever. An earache paired up with a fever is a sure sign that an infection has settled into your inner ear area. The inner ear is extremely sensitive, and this is why ear infections are so painful.Another sure sign of an infection is the build-up of fluid in the infected area. As fluid builds in the inner ear, it will become very difficult to hear, and your hearing will get worse as the infection gets worse. As the fluid fills the inner ear, it will also start to drain. Common SymptomsEaracheNauseaDifficulty hearingDraining earFever Sometimes it seems like kids are always getting ear infections. Ear infections are very common in children. Children get ear infections about two out of every three times they have a cold. Children are more prone to ear infections because their small ears do not drain fluid as well as adult ears. Kids' immune systems are also immature, and this increases the likelihood of certain infections. There are three types of ear infections. Each type is defined according to where they occur in the ear canal. An ear infection may take place in the inner, middle, or outer ear. Each type of ear infection may exhibit different symptoms. An infection of the ear canal (the outer ear) is sometimes referred to as swimmer's ear. The name comes from the fact that it most often occurs when the ear canal stays wet long enough for bacteria or other organisms to grow. Causes of Swimmer's Ear The skin lining the ear canal and outer ear offers protection against infections from bacteria and fungi. However, when this skin barrier is broken, bacteria or fungi can invade the ear and cause infection. This ear infection is known as swimmer's ear or an outer ear infection. Swimmer's ear can be caused by too much moisture in the ear canal or from inserting something too deep into the ear. Swimming or showering causes the acidic environment of the ear canal to be altered, which allows bacteria or fungi to invade the ear. The lining of the ear canal can also be broken by scratching or injuring from cotton swabs or other objects when inserted into the ear. Other causes of swimmer's ear include chemicals that irritate the ear canal and skin conditions that cause the skin to crack. Swimmer's Ear Symptoms Swimmer's ear is typically painful. Pain caused by swimmer's ear gradually begins over a day or two. The pain is especially intense when the ear is touched or pulled, or when chewing. Symptoms of swimmer's ear include the following: Ear pain or earache (almost always involves only one ear) Ear canal itching Outer ear redness Ear canal swollen shut Ear draining fluid or pus (drainage may be clear, white, yellow, or sometimes bloody and foul smelling) Fluid crusting at the opening of the ear canal Trouble hearing Ringing in the ear (tinnitus) and dizziness or spinning sensation (vertigo) Feeling of fullness in the ear Pain on the side of the face or neck Swollen lymph nodes Swimmer's Ear Treatment Drops and Home Remedy Options Treatment for swimmer's ear includes avoiding swimming, over-the-counter pain relievers, and possibly antibiotics. Doctors may prescribe medications that offer symptom relief and clean the affected ear. Home remedies for swimmer's ear include applying heat to the ear with a heating pad and a white vinegar rinse to help restore the ear canal's natural pH and reduce swelling. The diagnosis of an ear infection is made by examining the inside of the ear with an instrument called an otoscope. A normal, healthy eardrum has a pinkish-gray color as shown here. The healthy eardrum is clear, while an infected eardrum is bulging (swollen) and reddened. A doctor may also perform a tympanometry, which measures how the eardrum responds to a change of air pressure inside the ear. Hearing tests are also common ways to diagnose an ear infection, especially in children who have fluid in both ears. Blood tests can also be taken if there are signs of immune problems. Middle ear infections are caused by bacteria and viruses. Swelling from an upper respiratory infection or allergy can block the Eustachian tubes, which would prevent air from reaching the middle ear. A vacuum and suction then pulls fluid and germs from the nose and throat into the middle ear. Since the tubes are swollen, the fluid cannot drain. This provides a medium for the growth of bacteria or virus, which leads to a middle ear infection. The otoscope can blow a tiny puff of air against the eardrum to see if it vibrates normally. When there is fluid present in the middle ear, the eardrum does not vibrate normally. Eustachian Tube The Eustachian tube is the canal that connects your middle ear to your throat. When the Eustachian tube is open as it is normally, it prevents fluid and air pressure from building up inside the ear. Infections like colds, the flu, or allergic reactions can cause the Eustachian tube to become swollen and blocked. Middle Ear Infection Symptoms Symptoms of a middle ear infections tend to occur 2 to 7 days after the start of a cold or other respiratory infection. Middle ear infection symptoms may include: Ear pain (mild to severe) Fever Drainage from the ear that is thick and yellow or bloody Loss of appetite, vomiting, and grumpy behavior Trouble sleeping Middle Ear Infection Treatment Treatment for middle ear infections typically focuses on relieving pain. Over-the-counter pain and fever medications such as acetaminophen and ibuprofen are used. Of note, you should never give aspirin to children. A doctor may prescribe antibiotics for a middle ear infection, but ear infections tend to get better without them. If children have repeat ear infections, a doctor may prescribe long-term oral antibiotic treatment. Inserting ear tubes or removing the adenoids or tonsils may also be a solution for children who have repeat middle ear infections. Labyrinthitis is inflammation inside the inner ear. Labyrinthitis occurs when the labyrinth, a part of the inner ear that helps control your balance, gets swollen. The inflammation of the labyrinth can be caused by respiratory illnesses, viral and bacterial ear infections. Inner Ear Infection Symptoms Inner ear infection symptoms begin quickly and can be quite intense for several days. Inner ear infection symptoms include the following: Dizziness Nausea Loss of hearing Vertigo (dizziness with the sensation of moving) Tinnitus (ringing or buzzing in the ear) Difficulty focusing eyes Inner Ear Infection Treatment Inner ear infection treatment usually involves medication to control symptoms, such as prescription and over-the-counter antihistamines, sedatives, and corticosteroids. Antibiotics may be prescribed if there is an active infection. The following are various vertigo treatment options: Avoid quick change in position or sudden moves Sit still during a vertigo attack Get up slowly if lying down or seated Avoid bright screens or flashing lights during a vertigo attack Use low-light rather than darkness or bright lights When the pressure from fluid buildup is too high inside the middle ear, the eardrum can rupture, as shown here. When the eardrum bursts, brown, yellow, or whitish fluid can drain from the ear. Sometimes when the eardrum bursts, the pain suddenly resolves because the pressure is relieved. Ruptured Eardrum Symptoms A ruptured eardrum can cause many symptoms. However, the most common symptoms of a ruptured eardrum are an uncomfortable feeling in the ear and the sound of air coming out of the ear when blowing your nose. The following are other symptoms of a ruptured eardrum: Sudden sharp ear pain or a sudden decrease in ear pain Drainage from the ear that may be bloody, clear, or resemble pus Ear noise or buzzing Hearing loss that may be partial or complete in the affected ear Episodic ear infections Facial weakness or dizziness Ruptured Eardrum Treatment The eardrum usually heals without medical treatment within a few weeks after a rupture, and hearing is typically not worsened unless rupture and/or infection continues to occur frequently over a period of time. Antibiotics may be prescribed in order to prevent an ear infection. Over-the-counter pain medications may also be suggested if the ruptured eardrum is causing pain. The eardrum may require surgery to repair the rupture. If this is the case, a doctor will attach a piece of your own tissue, usually from above the ear, to the eardrum for reconstruction. Ear pain is the main sign of ear infection in children. Kids with ear infections may have trouble sleeping because of the pain. Other symptoms include discharge or fluid coming from the ears, fever, problems with hearing, dizziness, or nasal congestion. Symptoms of fluid buildup are: Popping, ringing, or a feeling of fullness or pressure in the ear Children may rub their ears trying to relieve pressure Trouble hearing. Children who have problems hearing may seem dreamy or inattentive, or they may appear grumpy or cranky Balance problems and dizziness Ear infections aren't always apparent in babies and children who are too young to describe their pain. They may signify ear pain by pulling on or fussing with their ear. They may just be irritable, or not eating or sleeping well. Babies sometimes refuse to drink from a bottle because swallowing hurts their ears. Ear infection symptoms in babies may include: Fever Ear drainage Trouble hearing Poor appetite Vomiting Diarrhea There are some home remedies to help your child's ear pain. Ear drops can bring relief, but these should not be used without checking with your child's doctor first. Over-the-counter pain and fever medications such as acetaminophen and ibuprofen are used. However, you should never give aspirin to children. Warm washcloths applied to the outside of the ear may be helpful in relieving some pain. Gargling with salt water may help soothe an aggravated throat and possibly clear the Eustachian tubes. A few drops of warmed olive oil in the ears may soothe ear pain, but it is suggested to speak with your child's doctor beforehand. Sometimes ear infections resolve without any specific treatment. Some ear infections are caused by viruses, and antibiotics are only effective against bacterial infections, not viral infections. It is possible that your doctor may not want to prescribe antibiotics to start. Your doctor will decide if and when antibiotics should be used. Repeated ear infections can lead to scarring of the eardrums. Over time, this can cause hearing and speech problems. Your doctor may recommend having your child's hearing tested if he or she has frequent ear infections. A ruptured eardrum can also be the result of ongoing ear infections. If fluid continues to build up in the middle ear, the eardrum may burst. Chronic suppurative otitis media, chronic inflammation of the middle ear and mastoid cavity, can also develop if there is ongoing inflammation of the middle ear. This condition can cause some hearing loss, but it also can usually be treated with antibiotics. Tympanostomy tubes are small tubes that are sometimes inserted in the eardrums of children who have frequent ear infections. This image shows an ear tube positioned in the eardrum. The tubes allow ventilation and drainage of fluid so that fluid cannot buildup in the middle ear. This can lessen the chance of infection and reduce the pain that may be associated with pressure. After surgery, children usually recover within 1 to 2 hours. Ear tubes usually fall out on their own after 6 to 12 months, or a doctor can surgically remove them. Swollen tonsils are not usually a direct cause of ear infections. Enlarged adenoid tissue in the back of the nose can sometimes put pressure on the Eustachian tubes, preventing them from draining fluid out of the ear. However, they are more likely the source of bacteria that causes ear infections. Sometimes, doctors recommend removal for children who have very large adenoids and frequent ear infections. Ear infections are not contagious. However, many children develop ear infections after a cold or other viral infection. Since viral infections are contagious, it is important to do your best to prevent illness. By preventing colds, you're also taking steps to prevent ear infections. Thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent colds. Other preventive measures against infection include avoiding secondhand smoke, receiving the annual seasonal flu vaccine, and breastfeeding babies for at least 6 months to enhance their immune systems. Allergies can cause inflammation and contribute to ear infections by interfering with the Eustachian tube's ability to let air pass into the middle ear. However, in children under two years of age, allergies are usually not the main cause of ear infections. Allergy testing can identify the allergen triggers for your child. Medications or allergy shots usually can bring relief and also lessen the likelihood of ear infections. Sources: IMAGES PROVIDED BY: Mauro Fermariello / Photo Researchers, Inc. David Nardini / Photographer's Choice / Getty Images Copyright © ISM / Phototake -- All rights reserved. Laurie O'Keefe / Photo Researchers, Inc. Brian Evans / Photo Researchers, Inc. Copyright © ISM / Phototake -- All rights reserved. Mark Clarke / Photo Researchers, Inc. 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