

Otitis Media

What is "otitis media"?

Infection of the middle ear, associated with inflammation and a build up of fluid behind the eardrum, Anyone can develop it, but infants between 6 and 15 months old are most commonly affected. It's estimated that around 1 in 4 children experience at least one middle ear infection by the time they are 10 years old.

What are the symptoms?

- Earache in older children and adults
- Holding, tugging or rubbing the ear in young children
- Fever
- Fatigue
- Sickness
- Slight hearing loss



How is it treated?

For acute otitis media, most infections clear up within 3 to 5 days - symptoms can be managed with pain relief and use of a warm flannel over the affected ear. Complications are rare with or without antibiotics, and using antibiotics when they are not needed increases the risk of resistance.

- **Anaesthetic & analgesic** ear drops for 7 days can be considered if you are under 18
- **Oral antibiotics** for 7 days if you are at risk of complications, or your infection has not cleared on its own within 3 to 5 days: such as amoxicillin, or clarithromycin or erythromycin if you have a penicillin allergy, for 5 to 7 days.

How can I help myself?

To ease symptoms, pain relief such as **paracetamol** or **ibuprofen** can be used, or placing a **warm flannel** over the affected ear.

To help reduce the risk of your child developing acute otitis media:

- Make sure your child is up-to-date with their routine **vaccinations**
- Avoid exposing your child to **smoky** environments
- Don't give your child a **dummy** once they're older than 6 to 12 months old
- Don't feed your child while they're lying flat on their back
- Read the following patient information leaflets:



<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/ears-nose-and-throat/middle-ear-infection-otitis-media>



www.nhs.uk/conditions/ear-infections

When should I seek further help?

- There is **pain, swelling and redness** behind the ear, and the ear is pushed forwards (seek urgent help)
- Symptoms of complications occur such as severe headache, high temperature, stiff neck, sensitivity to light, rash, or facial paralysis (these are rare with or without antibiotic treatment, but if they do occur, seek urgent help)
- **Dizziness**, vertigo, or loss of balance occurs
- You or your child develops a discharge of **pus** or fluid from the ear which does not go away
- Your symptoms have not resolved on their own within 3 to 5 days
- You have taken antibiotics for 5 to 7 days but your infection has not cleared