

Ear infections are common in babies and small children. They often follow a cold and sometimes cause a temperature. A child may pull or rub at an ear, but babies can't always tell where pain is coming from and may just cry and seem uncomfortable.



Signs that your child might have an ear infection include:

- Pulling, tugging, or rubbing their ear
- A high temperature (38°C or above)
- Irritability
- Poor feeding
- Restlessness at night
- Coughing
- Runny nose
- Unresponsiveness to quiet sound
- Loss of balance

If your child has earache but is otherwise well, give them paracetamol or ibuprofen for 12-24 hours. Don't put any oil, eardrops or cotton buds into your child's ear unless your GP advises you to do so. Most ear infections are caused by viruses, which can't be treated with antibiotics. They will just get better by themselves. After an ear infection your child may have a problem hearing for two to six weeks. If the problem lasts for any longer than this, ask your GP for advice.

Glue ear

Repeated middle ear infections (otitis media) may lead to glue ear, where sticky fluid builds up and can affect your child's hearing. This may lead to unclear speech or behavioural problems. If you smoke, your child is more likely to develop glue ear and will get better more slowly. Your GP will give you advice on treating glue ear.

Treating an ear infection

Most ear infections clear up within a couple of days. Paracetamol or ibuprofen (appropriate for the child's age) can be used to relieve pain and high temperature. Do not give aspirin to children under 16 years old. Antibiotics are usually only needed if symptoms persist or are particularly severe.



For more information, help and support go to www.choosewellmanchester.org.uk or visit NHS Choices at www.nhs.uk

Choose the right care

What to do next...



Choose care at home if...

- Your child has any of the symptoms of an ear infection
- If in doubt, you can call your GP or the NHS 111 service for advice



Choose your Pharmacy or GP if...

- Symptoms show no sign of improvement after 24 hours – call your GP
- Your child seems to be in a lot of pain – call your GP
- You notice fluid coming from the ear – call your GP, even if it's the middle of the night



Call 999 A&E if...

- There are no reasons why you should need to go to A&E for problems with ear infections
- A&E is for urgent, life-threatening illness and injury



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