

# Ear inflammation in children

PATIENT  
INFORMATION

Ear inflammation is an infection in the middle ear that often occurs during a cold. This leaflet explains what you can do to help and what you should think about if your child has been diagnosed with an ear inflammation.

## What you can do

You can alleviate your child's symptoms by

- using an extra pillow to raise your child's head when they are sleeping
- giving your child over-the-counter medications to relieve pain and lower fever.

Your pharmacist can advise you which medicines are recommended for children of different ages. You can also get medical advice by calling 1177.

You should keep your child home from preschool or school until they have been fever-free for 24 hours, are fully alert and no longer have ear pain.

## Is a hearing test necessary after ear inflammation?

It is common for hearing to be worse for a few weeks after ear inflammation. Adults and children over the age of four only need to go for a test if their hearing does not recover. Younger children may need a hearing test (see the box to the right).

### Fill in at the clinic:

Today, the child has an ear inflammation in

- ☐ their left ear
- ☐ their right ear.
- ☐ The other ear is healthy.
- ☐ There is fluid behind the eardrum of the other ear.
- ☐ A hearing test will not be necessary if everything is fine.
- ☐ A hearing test will be needed in three months.

The child was seen by:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Book an appointment with: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE TURN OVER... ➤



Folkhälsomyndigheten

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## What should you be aware of?

Regardless of whether your child has been given antibiotics or not, contact your healthcare provider again if the problems get worse. Do this if

- fluid starts to run out of the ear
- you think that your child's health is getting worse
- your child has not improved within three days.

Seek medical care immediately if your child

- is much more sluggish than usual or is not very responsive
- has difficulty keeping their balance
- has swelling behind the ear or if the ear starts to stick out
- screams and is restless and you think this is due to them being in pain.

## Do antibiotics help with an ear inflammation?

Most cases of ear inflammation in children get better by themselves, but sometimes antibiotics are needed. If the doctor decides that your child needs antibiotics, it is important that the child takes the medication as instructed by the doctor.

## Are there any disadvantages to antibiotics?

Antibiotics are important medications needed for a number of bacterial infections. They must only be taken when there is a clear benefit, as antibiotics also have disadvantages. Antibiotics also kill the 'good' bacteria in your body. Antibiotics can cause side effects, such as diarrhoea and rashes/hives.

The more antibiotics are used in society, the bigger the risk of bacteria becoming resistant to antibiotics and more difficult to treat. This is another reason why antibiotics must only be used when there is a benefit. Penicillin is commonly used to treat ear inflammation in children. It affects antibiotic resistance less than other types of antibiotics.

## What is an ear inflammation?

An ear inflammation is an infection of the middle ear that often occurs during a cold. It usually starts suddenly, lasts for a few days and normally gets better by itself. An ear inflammation is usually caused by bacteria, after the cold virus has made the mucous membranes in the airways more vulnerable to other infectious agents.

Pus is formed and pressure increases behind the eardrum, which often hurts. The child will often develop a fever. Other symptoms may include hearing problems, poor appetite and disturbed sleep. Sometimes, the eardrum may burst and the pus then drains into the ear canal.

Call **1177** if you need medical advice. They will help you assess your symptoms or explain where to go for treatment. You can also visit **[www.1177.se](http://www.1177.se)**

This information was produced by the Public Health Agency of Sweden and Strama, the Swedish strategic programme against antibiotic resistance. This fact sheet is part of the Antibiotic Smart Sweden initiative. The text is based on treatment recommendations from the Swedish Medical Products Agency. The information applies to the expected progression of common infections. The fact sheet can be downloaded in Swedish and several other languages from [www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/patinfo-oroninflammation](http://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/patinfo-oroninflammation)

