

RECURRENT EAR INFECTIONS

Ear infections, also called otitis media, are very common in children 6 months to 3 years of age.

Causes

Ear infections are caused by viruses or bacteria. These germs travel from the back of the throat through the eustachian tubes that connect to the middle ear space. This often happens after a cold.

Risk Factors

- Young age
- Daycare attendance
- Exposure to second hand smoke
- First Nations descent
- Children with cleft palate

Symptoms

Young children cannot always tell you if their ear is causing discomfort. These kids might have unexplained fever, fussiness, trouble sleeping, and pulling at their ears.

Treatment

If your child is <6 months or has medical problems, your doctor will likely prescribe antibiotics. If your child is >6 months and doesn't have too much pain or a high fever, they may suggest watching for 2-3 days to see if the ear infection gets better on its own (as most do!) You can give your child acetaminophen or ibuprofen for pain relief.

Recurrent Infections

If your child is getting frequent ear infections (>3 in 6 months or >4 in 1 year), your doctor may refer your child to an ear, nose and throat surgeon to discuss the placement of tubes in the ears. The other indication for tubes is the presence of fluid behind the ear drums that isn't resolving on its own.

Prevention

- Routine immunizations are very important in protecting against bacteria that cause ear infections
- Good handwashing can prevent colds that lead to ear infections
- Don't expose your child to second hand smoke