

# Otitis Media (Ear Infection)



Otitis media (or ear infection):

- May be common
- Should never be ignored

Research shows that:

- 75% of children have at least one ear infection or inflammation of the middle ear, by their third birthday
- Nearly half of all children who have one ear infection will have three or more ear infections by their third birthday

Persistent fluid in the middle ear and chronic otitis media can:

- Reduce a child's hearing at a time critical for speech and language development
- Lead to speech and language difficulties

## Common signs

Detecting otitis media is sometimes difficult, since most children affected by this disorder:

- Do not have sufficient speech and language skills
- Cannot tell someone what is bothering them

Common signs to look for are:

- Decreased (or loss of) appetite
- Difficulty sleeping
- Fever
- Fluid draining from the ear
- Loss of balance
- Signs of hearing difficulty such as sitting too close to the television or being inattentive
- Tugging or pulling at one or both ears
- Unresponsiveness to quiet sounds
- Unusual irritability

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To help keep a child from developing an earache or infection:

- Avoid contact with sick playmates and environmental tobacco smoke
- Breastfeed, as infants who nurse from a bottle while lying down also appear to develop otitis media more frequently

Otitis media can affect adults, even though it primarily affects:

- Infants
- Young children

## Effects of Otitis Media

- Causes temporary hearing loss
- Causes severe pain
- May result in serious complications if not treated

If not treated, otitis media may:

- Result in an infection spreading to the brain
- Cause permanent hearing impairment

## Diagnosis

To detect otitis media, a doctor will:

- Examine the outer ear and the eardrum
- Check for middle ear fluid

## Treatment

Treatment for otitis media:

- Typically can be handled by your child's doctor, or at an urgent care center or retail clinic
- Rarely needs urgent or emergency care

If your child doesn't have a doctor:

- Use our online [Find a Doctor service](#)
- Look for a doctor accepting new patients near you
- Call the doctor to set up a visit

A child's doctor may prescribe:

- An antibiotic to treat an active middle ear infection
- A pain reliever, if the child is in pain

Be sure to:

- Follow the doctor's instructions
- Make sure the child takes the antibiotic until it is finished – even if the child feels better

Antibiotics can produce side effects like:

- Diarrhea
- Nausea
- Rashes

Keep in mind that:

- Most doctors will have the child return for a follow-up visit to see if the infection has cleared
- Most infections tend to clear up, when treated, within three to six weeks
- Never give a child aspirin, as it can cause a life-threatening condition called Reyes syndrome

## Prevention

Help your child reduce the risk of developing otitis media by:

- Keeping him or her up to date on vaccines, as they help prevent viruses that can cause ear infections
- Controlling allergies, as inflammation can cause ear infections
- Reducing the risk for developing a cold, such as by washing hands frequently and not sharing toys, food, or utensils



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### Source

1. "Otitis Media." National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, National Institutes of Health, last accessed on August 27, 2021, <https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/sites/default/files/Content%20Images/otitismedia.pdf>.

## Call If You Need Us

If you have questions or need help reading or understanding this document, call us at **800-480-1825 (TTY: 711)**. We are available Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Eastern time. We can help you at no cost to you. We can explain the document in English or in your first language. We can also help you if you need help seeing or hearing. Please refer to your Member Handbook regarding your rights.

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- You may file a complaint, also known as a grievance:  
**Discrimination Grievances**, P.O. Box 14618, Lexington, KY 40512-4618  
If you need help filing a grievance, call **800-480-1825** or if you use a **TTY**, call **711**.
- You can also file a civil rights complaint with the  
**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights**  
electronically through their Complaint Portal, available at  
<https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/portal/lobby.jsf>, or at **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**, 200 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 509F, HHH Building, Washington, DC 20201, **800-368-1019, 800-537-7697 (TDD)**. Complaint forms are available at <https://www.hhs.gov/ocr/office/file/index.html>.

### Auxiliary aids and services, free of charge, are available to you. **800-480-1825 (TTY: 711)**

Humana provides free auxiliary aids and services, such as qualified sign language interpreters, video remote interpretation, and written information in other formats to people with disabilities when such auxiliary aids and services are necessary to ensure an equal opportunity to participate.

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Language assistance services, free of charge, are available to you. **800-480-1825 (TTY: 711)**

**English:** Call the number above to receive free language assistance services.

**Español (Spanish):** Llame al número que se indica arriba para recibir servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística.

**繁體中文 (Chinese):** 您可以撥打上面的電話號碼以獲得免費的語言協助服務。

**Tiếng Việt (Vietnamese):** Gọi số điện thoại ở trên để nhận các dịch vụ hỗ trợ ngôn ngữ miễn phí.

**(Korean):** 무료 언어 지원 서비스를 받으려면 위 번호로 전화하십시오.

**Tagalog (Tagalog – Filipino):** Tawagan ang numero sa itaas para makatanggap ng mga libreng serbisyo sa tulong sa wika.

**Русский (Russian):** Позвоните по вышеуказанному номеру, чтобы получить бесплатную языковую поддержку.

**Kreyòl Ayisyen (French Creole):** Rele nimewo ki endike anwo a pou resevwa sèvis éd gratis nan lang.

**Français (French):** Appelez le numéro ci-dessus pour recevoir des services gratuits d'assistance linguistique.

**Polski (Polish):** Aby skorzystać z bezpłatnej pomocy językowej, należy zadzwonić pod wyżej podany numer.

**Português (Portuguese):** Ligue para o número acima para receber serviços gratuitos de assistência no idioma.

**Italiano (Italian):** Chiamare il numero sopra indicato per ricevere servizi di assistenza linguistica gratuiti.

**Deutsch (German):** Wählen Sie die oben angegebene Nummer, um kostenlose sprachliche Hilfsdienstleistungen zu erhalten.

**日本語 (Japanese):** 無料の言語支援サービスを受けるには、上記の番号までお電話ください。

**Diné Bizaad (Navajo):** Wódaḥí béésh bee hani'í bee wolta'ígíí bich'í' hódíílnih éí bee t'áá jik'eh saad bee áká'ánída'áwo'déé nika'adoowol.

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تبرعاً (Arabic)