



MIDDLE EAR INFECTION

Acute otitis media

Middle ear infections are usually the result of an infection of the nose and throat, causing blockage and fluid build-up behind the ear drum. They are common in young children, especially after a cold.



What does it feel like?

Middle ear infections usually cause **ear pain**, **reduced hearing**, and a **fever**. Children may be **irritable**, **cry a lot**, **pull and rub their ear**, and have **trouble sleeping**.



What can I do to feel better?

Symptoms usually resolve within 2-3 days. **Paracetamol** and **ibuprofen** may help reduce pain. It may also be helpful to avoid cigarette smoke in the environment and check that your immunisations are up to date.



Will antibiotics help?

Antibiotics are not usually needed. Most middle ear infections resolve without antibiotics; however, they are important for some groups of people who are at increased risk of complications (see below). Taking antibiotics when you don't need them can lead to the bacteria becoming resistant to that antibiotic. When bacteria become resistant to an antibiotic, the antibiotic no longer works.



Do I need to see a doctor?

See your doctor **if symptoms worsen or are not improving within 2-3 days**. **Children under 6 months**, **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders** or those with **other medical conditions** which affect their ability to fight infections should see a doctor as they may need to start antibiotics earlier. You should see your doctor if you feel very unwell or you are concerned.

COVID-19 is caused by a virus, and it can cause cough, runny nose, and sore throat. People with these symptoms should be tested for COVID-19 and should isolate until test results are known.

For information go to health.gov.au/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19

This information sheet was developed by the National Centre for Antimicrobial Stewardship and the University of Melbourne.

Information sheets on other common infections can be found at <https://www.ncas-australia.org/community-information-sheets>.

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