

Title: Information about Acute Otitis Media

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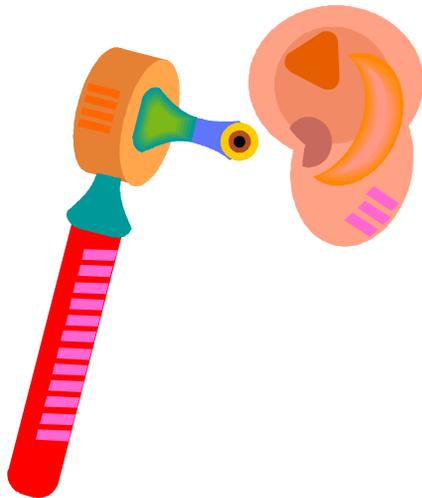
Date: 3/4/2009

Key words: Acute Otitis Media

Abstract: Antibiotic treatment for acute otitis media (ear infection) is not necessary in all patients, but should be used in young patients and those with more severe disease. Choosing only the patients that need antibiotics has the advantage of avoiding the unwanted side-effects and problems of antibiotics.

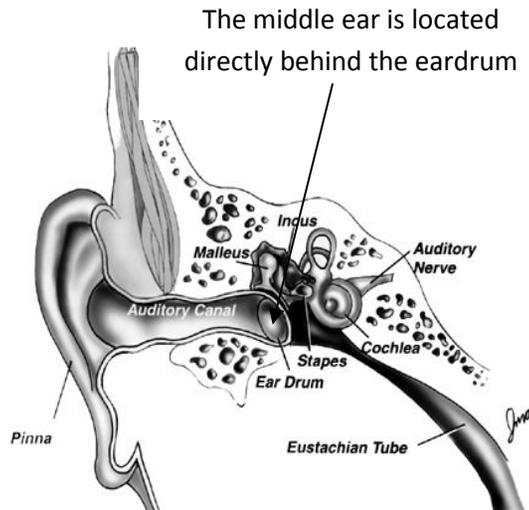
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# Acute Otitis Media (Ear Infection)



## What is an Otitis Media?

Otitis Media, more commonly called an ear infection, is caused by infection or inflammation of the middle ear compartment behind the eardrum. The infections can be either viral or bacterial and can be caused by the spread of colds and sore throats to the middle ear. It can be either acute, meaning its onset was recent or it can be chronic meaning it has been present for a long duration of time.



## Who gets Otitis Media?

Both children and adults can become sick with otitis media, but children are more susceptible to it due to the structure of their ear canal which allows for the pooling of infected fluid.



Over 60% of infants have an ear infection by one year of age, and over 80% have an episode by 3 years of age.

## How is it treated?

Treatment of acute otitis media depends on the age of the child.

- all children under age 6 months should be treated with antibiotics
- children between 6 months and 2 years should be treated only if the diagnosis is certain
- children greater than 2 years of age should only be treated if the diagnosis is certain and the infection is severe.

For all other cases of otitis media, your doctor may wish for you to observe the child for 48-72 hours and return if your child has not improved. During this period, you should still treat your child with Tylenol or ibuprofen for pain. Please remember, if the doctor does give you a prescription for an

antibiotic, it is very important for your child to finish the entire course of the drug.



## Why not just treat everyone with antibiotics?

Many parents feel that antibiotics are the best way to get their children out of pain and feeling better fast. However, the truth is that antibiotics can also cause quite a few problems. Antibiotics can fairly commonly produce unwanted side effects such as nausea, diarrhea and rash. Also using antibiotics in situations where they are not useful, such as colds and viral infections can lead to antibiotic resistance making the antibiotics less effective.

## How can I stop my child from getting ear infections?

You may not be able to. Some things that you can do that may help are:

- Stop smoking. Studies have shown a 50% higher risk of otitis media in children with a parent who smokes.
- Avoid contact with sick children.
- Some research has shown that breast fed children have lower rates of otitis media in the first three months of life.

