

Ear Infections



Ear infections can affect the outside of the ear and ear canal but also the middle of the ear. This is particularly common in young children. Usually, it will resolve itself within three days but sometimes treatment may be necessary.

Symptoms include:

- Earache
- Itching around the ears
- Dullness of hearing
- Discharge
- Pain
- In younger children, holding, tugging of the ears and general feeling of unwell, such as fever, crying, poor feeding, restlessness, runny nose or cough.

Red flag symptoms

- Non-blanching rash – rashes that do not disappear with pressure
- Drowsiness
- Neck stiffness
- Sensitivity to light
- Facial nerve paralysis – inability to move facial movements such as blinking

Self-care advice

- Warm or cold flannel on the ear
- Over the counter painkillers
- Remove any discharge by wiping the ear with cotton wool
- Avoid using cotton buds in ears as it can push down ear wax and cause irritation to the ears.
- Try not to let water or shampoo to get into the ears

Onward referrals

- Reoccurring ear infections
- Symptoms unresolved after three days
- Hearing loss or a change in hearing
- Swelling around the ears

Signposting

- Pharmacy First England – Antibiotics or ear drops
- Pharmacy First Scotland – Ear drops

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