

Ear Infections and Speech and Language Development



What is an Ear Infection (otitis media)?

Acute otitis media is an infection that happens when either bacteria or viruses invade the middle ear. It often follows a cold and is most common in children three months to three years of age. A young child with acute otitis media is likely to be fussy and irritable. They may have trouble sleeping, feeding and hearing. Older children often complain about ear pain, fullness or pressure in the ear and difficulty hearing. A child of any age may have a fever and cold symptoms.

What Causes Fluid in the Ear?

An ear infection can cause fluid to collect in the middle ear. Even once the infection has ended, fluid may be present for six weeks or longer.

Blockage of the tiny passageway that connects the middle ear to the back of the throat (eustachian tube) can also cause fluid to collect in the middle ear due to problems with allergies or adenoids.

Fluid in the ear may affect hearing. A child with fluid in his/her ears may:

- misunderstand directions
- not pay attention to you
- want the TV or radio louder than usual

Why Is It So Important To See a Doctor?

Any child with symptoms of otitis media or fluid in the ears should be checked by a doctor. In the case of an infection your doctor may prescribe an antibiotic. He/she may also recommend a medicine (eg. acetaminophen) to help with fever and pain. Sometimes, complications such as hearing loss can occur which may affect your child's ability to learn speech and language. Your doctor will help you decide what kind of treatment is best for your child.

**DON'T WAIT
EARLY HELP MAKES
A DIFFERENCE!**

Call 519-272-8216 or 1-866-333-7716
and ask for **smallTALK**

Visit our web site at www.smalltalkinfo.ca

Services provided by smallTALK are funded
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Can Ear Infections Be Prevented?

There are some things you can do that may help reduce your child's risk of ear infection.

Common colds can lead to ear infections. You can help reduce the risk of ear infections by reducing risk for the common cold.

- Limit exposure to large crowds.
- Teach children to cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or blowing their nose.
- Encourage your child to wash their hands frequently.
- Exposure to second-hand smoke may also increase your child's risk for ear infections, so keep your home smoke-free.
- In infants, breastfeeding helps prevent ear infections by passing along immunity from mom to baby.
- Ear infections can also result from influenza infection in young children. Flu vaccine has been shown to reduce their occurrence by 30-40 percent. Vaccination is recommended for everyone from six months of age.

**Parents, trust your instincts
and call us if you**

- have questions or concerns about the way your child's speech and language skills are developing
- want to refer your child for a speech and language assessment
- want more information on other topics related to speech and language development

