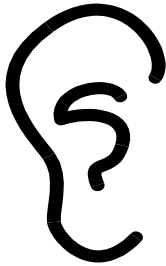


Earache



Earache

Earache in children is distressing for both parent and child. The purpose of this leaflet is to help you know what is happening and how to help your child if they have earache.

Earache in children is usually due to a viral infection. It often follows a cold and is called acute otitis media by doctors. Acute otitis media is a common, self-limiting childhood illness. About 4 children in every 10 experience at least one attack in the first 10 years of life.

The most common complaint is PAIN. This can be severe and is often worse in the evening or at night. Other symptoms may include a discharge from the ear and deafness. Children can have any or even all of these symptoms. Younger children and babies may not experience symptoms specifically to their ear, but general symptoms such as fever and vomiting. They may pull at the affected ear.

Most children with acute otitis media get better on their own and are pain-free within 24 to 48 hours. There is clear evidence that antibiotics do not help children get better any quicker nor do they prevent the development of ear problems such as "glue ear".

Recent advice to GPs, based on much evidence, suggests that pain relief should be given regularly for the first 48 hours if required. Only after this time, is it appropriate for any other treatments to be considered.

What to do if your child develops earache:

1. Give pain relief as either paracetamol or ibuprofen in the dose directed on the bottle.
2. Some children may be comforted by something warm held to the affected ear. (Care needs to be taken with hot water bottles to avoid the risk of scalding.)
3. If a discharge appears from the ear, don't panic, the eardrum has burst and the pain should settle rapidly. Eardrums usually heal again within days. You should make an appointment to have your child seen by your GP in the next few days.
4. If your child still has significant pain after 48 hours make an appointment to see your GP soon.