When fluid becomes trapped in the inner ear it causes an ear infection. This can happen after a cold, flu or respiratory infection. Many children have ear infections more than once, and fluid can stay in your child’s ear for 2-3 months after the infection. Untreated ear infections can lead to serious complications such as hearing loss.

### Symptoms

*Not all children have the same symptoms. If you are wondering if your child has an ear infection, look for a combination of these symptoms.*

- Pulling on the ear
- Pain in the ear, or ears feel like they are ringing
- Had a fever or cold within the last week
- Starts to speak later than other children
- Behavioral problems, irritable or cranky
- Trouble balancing or feeling dizzy
- Trouble speaking, hearing, or paying attention
- Inability to sleep

### Treatment

**Homecare**

- Talk to your health care provider about which medicines you should use.
- Do not give your child aspirin unless your health care provider okays it.
- A warm, not hot, heating pad held over the ear can help relieve the earache.
- Ear drops to relieve pain can sometimes be used. Ask your health care provider which drops to use.

**Antibiotics**

- An antibiotic may be used if an ear infection is caused by bacteria. Antibiotics do not work for infections caused by viruses.
- Your healthcare provider can tell you when an antibiotic as needed.

### Prevention

- Washing your hands and washing their hands frequently
- Breast feeding your child when they are a baby
- Holding your baby at an angle instead of horizontally when you breast feed or bottle feed
- Weaning your child off their pacifier by 6 months of age
- Not smoking around your child
- Getting appropriate vaccinations for you and your child. Ask your health care provider for more information about vaccines.

*Used with permission from the Community Health Association of Mountain/Plains States (CHAMPS)*

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