

Focus On: Ear Infection (Otitis Media)

Otitis media is an ear infection behind the eardrum in the middle ear.

It can be caused by a virus or bacteria.

An ear infection usually starts with a cold.

A cold can cause swelling in the small tube that connects each ear to the throat.

These two tubes are called eustachian tubes.

Swelling can block the tube and trap fluid inside the ear.

This makes it a perfect place for bacteria or viruses to grow and cause an infection.

Ear infections happen mostly to young children, and they can hurt a lot.

Children with ear infections often fuss and cry, pull at their ears, and sleep poorly. They may lose their appetite. Older children will often tell you that their ear hurts.

Ear infections can also cause a fever. You may sometimes even see thick, yellow fluid coming from the ear.

A doctor may prescribe antibiotics to treat an ear infection.

To ease symptoms, you can also use an over-the-counter pain reliever like acetaminophen (such as Tylenol), a warm washcloth on the ear, and rest.

To learn more about ear infections, talk to your doctor.