

Ear Care & Hearing

TODDLER

ARTICLE

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Parents should note if their children's speech is delayed or difficult to understand, have trouble holding their heads steady, or do not respond when called as these are signs of hearing problems.

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Your main concern should be protecting your toddler from exposure to loud sounds.

How should I care for my toddler's ears?

As for cleaning, simply wipe the outside of the ear with a damp, soft cloth. It is not recommended that you clean the inside of the ear with a cotton swab or any other object. Doing so could puncture the eardrum or push any wax further into the ear.

Your main concern should be protecting your toddler from exposure to loud sounds. As a general rule, a sound is too loud if you have to shout over it to make yourself heard. Protecting delicate ears is essential to preventing hearing loss.

What should I do if my toddler has wax in her ears?

If you notice a buildup of a waxy, yellowish substance in your child's ear, check with the doctor who will remove it or possibly recommend drops to help remove it.

You should not try to remove wax at home unless you have specific instructions from your doctor to do so.

What are some warning signs that my child might have a hearing problem?

Your child may have a hearing problem if

- She doesn't notice you until she sees you.
- She has trouble hearing when the sound comes from the side or the rear.
- She consistently doesn't respond when called.
- She seems to hear some sounds but not others.
- She has trouble holding her head steady.
- Her speech is delayed or hard to understand.

What are the signs of an ear infection?

Ear infections are usually painful. A child that is old enough to talk may tell you that her ear hurts. A younger child may pull at her ear and cry.

Excessive crying during sleep time or trouble sleeping is often a strong signal since lying down often increases the pain of an ear infection.

Fever of 38 to 40 degrees Celsius is also often an indicator of an ear infection. Blood-tinged yellow fluid or pus draining from the ear is also a sign of infection.

If you suspect an ear infection, you should consult your doctor as soon as possible.

How is an ear infection treated?

An antibiotic is often prescribed to treat an ear infection. Your doctor may also prescribe eardrops to relieve the pain. Liquid acetaminophen may also be recommended to treat the fever and the pain.

If an antibiotic is prescribed for your child, it is important that she finish all of the medication, even if she seems to be feeling better. Stopping too soon may allow the bacteria and infection to return.

Why does my toddler have so many ear infections?

First of all, you should know that your child is in good company. Two-thirds of all children have an ear infection by their second birthday.

Ear infections are common among toddlers because they are so susceptible to colds and upper respiratory infections. Fluid often accumulates in the middle ear because their tiny eustachian tubes often don't drain properly during these illnesses. If this fluid gets infected by bacteria, an ear infection results.

Can I do anything to prevent ear infection?

No, you can't really do anything to prevent occasional ear infections. However, if your child has gotten several infections one after the other, your doctor may recommend that she take a low dose of preventive antibiotics on an ongoing basis.

