

Earache & tonsillitis

A baby's ears need to be treated with care

Ear infections are common in babies and toddlers following a cold. A child may pull at their ear, but babies often cannot tell where their pain is coming from, so they just cry and seem generally uncomfortable.

Babies have some natural protection against infections in the first few weeks - this is boosted by breastfeeding. In babies and toddlers, bacteria pass from the nose to the ears more easily. Earache can be painful and your child may just need extra cuddles and painkillers (such as **sugar-free** paracetamol or ibuprofen) from the pharmacist.

Tonsillitis - Earache can also sometimes be caused by tonsillitis (inflammation of the tonsils). It is a common type of infection in children. Other symptoms include a sore throat, coughing and a high temperature. Your child may have swollen glands in the neck - this is the body's way of fighting infection.

It is not a serious illness and you only need to see your GP if symptoms last longer than four days or become more serious with severe pain, difficulty swallowing, a very high temperature or breathing difficulties.

Looking after your baby's ears

- A baby's ears need to be treated with care.
- Never use a cotton bud inside your child's ear.
- If they have a temperature wax may ooze out.
- Use different, clean damp cotton wool on each ear to gently clean around the outer area.
- Avoid smoky environments.
- Do not use ear drops or oil unless prescribed by your GP.
- If your child is still not hearing six weeks after infection, your GP/health visitor can refer them to audiology for a hearing test.

Newborn hearing screening

All newborn babies should be offered a hearing test. If your baby's hearing is not screened in hospital, ask your midwife or health visitor to arrange an appointment.

What are the signs of an ear infection?

The signs are a raised temperature, general irritability and pain or discomfort. The ears may be red and your baby may pull them because they are uncomfortable. They may even have a pus-like discharge, which can also be associated with a blocked feeling in the ear or hearing loss. Although most ear infections settle down without any serious effects, there can be mild hearing loss for a short time (two to three weeks).

1

My toddler has earache or a sore throat but seems otherwise well.

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Have you tried **sugar-free** paracetamol or ibuprofen from your pharmacist?

3

Most ear infections get better by themselves. Speak to your GP if symptoms show no sign of improvement after 24 hours, your child seems in a lot of pain or you notice fluid coming from the ear.

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