

# Earache & tonsillitis

## A baby's ears need to be treated with care

Ear infections, which can result in earache are common in babies and toddlers. They often follow a cold and can sometimes cause a temperature. 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. Ear infections can be painful and your child may just need extra cuddles and painkillers from the Pharmacist. Use the Minor Ailments Passport. Your child may have swollen glands in their neck - this is the body's way of fighting infection.

Children who live in households where people smoke (passive smoking) or who have a lot of contact with other children, like those who go to nursery, are more likely to get ear infections. Bottle fed infants are more prone to ear infections, due to the sucking technique. Try to cut down/discontinue bottles and discuss with your Health Visitor.

### To reduce ear infections

- 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 smoke.
- Do not use ear drops or oil unless prescribed by your Doctor.
- If your child is still not hearing six weeks after infection, your Health Visitor can refer them to audiology.

### Tonsillitis

Earache can also be caused by tonsillitis (the inflammation of the tonsils). It is a common type of infection in children. Symptoms include a sore throat, earache, coughing and a high temperature. It is not a serious illness and you only need to see your Doctor if symptoms last longer than four days or become more serious with severe pain, a very high temperature or breathing difficulties.

### 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).

## **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.

**1**

My toddler has earache but seems otherwise well.

**2**

Have you tried infant paracetamol or ibuprofen from your Pharmacist?

**3**

Most ear infections get better by themselves. Speak to a Doctor 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.

## **Smokefree**

Call 0800 022 4332 or visit [www.smokefree.nhs.uk](http://www.smokefree.nhs.uk)