

SOUTHSIDE

HEALTH & WELLBEING

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Ear Infections - Otitis Media

Otitis media is an acute infection of the middle ear and it is most common in children aged from three months to three years.

What Exactly is Otitis Media?

The eustachian tube is a tunnel linking the middle ear to the back of the nose and throat. It equalises the pressure outside the head with the pressure inside the head. If the eustachian tube is blocked, a negative pressure occurs in the middle ear which causes a build up of fluid. Organisms enter the eustachian tube from the throat and find their way to the middle ear, where the fluid build up and creates a good environment for them to multiply. In children the eustachian tube is shorter and more horizontal than an adults, making them more susceptible to infections.

Most cases of otitis media are acute and will resolve quickly. If the infection is not treated, or does not resolve properly, secretory otitis or glue ear may occur. This is a build up of a thick, gluey substance in the middle ear, which may require drainage either by surgery or the insertion of grommets to drain fluid from behind the tympanic membrane. Chronic otitis media occurs when the tympanic membrane is permanently perforated, causing a degree of hearing loss. Factors which may increase the risk of chronic otitis media include frequent bouts of acute otitis media, cigarette smoke, gastrointestinal reflux disease, and allergic rhinitis.

What Causes Otitis Media?

Around 85% of cases of otitis media are caused by a bacterial infection, usually following an upper respiratory infection or cold. The remaining cases are caused by viruses. The bacteria most commonly involved in otitis media include *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, *Haemophilus influenzae* and *Staphylococcus aureus*. Viruses may include respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), rhinovirus, adenovirus or influenza A or B.

Signs & Symptoms

- Pain in the ear. Babies will pull and tug on the affected ear, while older children will be able to report pain.
- Difficulty hearing or feeling of a blocked ear.
- Irritability, crying or fussiness.
- Loss of appetite and refusing feeds.
- Diarrhoea and vomiting.
- Sometimes a discharge may be visible in the ear canal.
- You may be able to see a bulging, inflamed tympanic membrane (eardrum).

Natural Solutions

1. If a painkiller is required, ask your naturopath for the most suitable homeopathic remedy and how it should be taken.
2. Keep the ear dry. Place a cotton wool ball in the ear when showering or bathing. Avoid swimming until healing is complete.
3. If the ear is discharging, gently use a cotton wool bud to help clean out the pus and blood. Do not put the bud in too far and remember to use the bud once only.
4. Consider taking the supplements recommended in this topic.
5. To alleviate pain, place a few drops of warm garlic oil or olive oil in the ear, then a drop or two of mullein or myrrh oil. Plug the ear loosely with a cotton ball.
6. Tissue salts such as potassium chloride and iron phosphate may help. Ask your naturopath for advice.

Diet Advice

- If breastfeeding or bottle-feeding, continue as normal or offer more frequent feeds. Try and position the baby upright when feeding to prevent milk entering the nose.
- Protein may help boost the immune system and repair tissue. For older children, include grilled fish and organic chicken without the skin 3-4 times a week.
- Garlic is a natural antibiotic and it may be helpful to include some in the diet every day.
- Identify any food allergies Common allergens include peanuts, wheat, dairy, and eggs. Ask your Naturopath for advice before eliminating foods from the diet.
- Give children 6 to 8 glasses of fluid a day. Water, diluted fruit juice and soup are great choices.
- Zinc helps boost the immune system and may reduce infection.
- Vitamin C boosts immunity and helps the body to fight infection.
- Echinacea helps clear an ear infection if the infection is caught early enough.
- Golden seal, garlic elderflower, essential fatty acids and bioflavonoids may be of benefit in the treatment of Otitis Media.

The Benefits of Ear Candling

Ear candling is a simple, gentle and effective therapy used in the treatment of swimmers ear, sinusitis, headaches, T.M.J. pain, otitis externa, tropical ear, tinnitus, and many stress related symptoms. The healing properties of ear candles have its foundation in two primary physical actions. Firstly, the slight vacuum (the chimney effect) inside the ear candle and the vibration of the rising air column serve to gently massage the ear drum and promote drainage of the frontal and paranasal sinuses. This has an immediate subjective effect of regulating ear pressure. Users of ear candles describe a soothing, light sensation in the ear/head area.

Secondly, the locally applied warmth stimulates the local circulation, invigorates local circulation and reinforces the flow of lymph. Ear candling is very effective in the treatment and prevention of ear infections for children.

Book in now and experience the gentle non invasive benefits of ear candling!