



Treatment for Otitis Media

Otitis media occurs when fluid builds up in the middle ear, the space behind the eardrum. This space is usually filled with air but sometimes it fills with fluid or mucus. This fluid can sometimes become infected and cause an ear infection. The infection can be caused by bacteria. Mostly the infection is caused by a virus.

What are the symptoms of otitis media?

Otitis media can cause;

- Very painful ear
- Slight deafness
- Fever
- Flu-like symptoms in children like vomiting and lethargy

What causes otitis media?

Often otitis media is caused by the common cold. The infection spreads from the nose and throat area and into the middle ear. Usually fluids in the ear drain out through the nose. But if the tube connecting the throat to the nose gets blocked then this can cause otitis media. Children who have glue ear and whose ears get filled with mucus are more likely to get an ear infection.

Do I need antibiotics?

Most cases of otitis media will clear up within 3 days without any treatment. Antibiotics will not make otitis media clear up faster. They may be prescribed if the infection is severe or if it is getting worse after 2-3 days. Antibiotics have side effects and this means that they are not always the best treatment.

What treatment should I take?

You may find that paracetamol or ibuprofen can help to reduce the pain or fever. Nose drops containing decongestants or antihistamines may help reduce the swelling of the mucous membranes in the nose and back of throat. This may help to drain mucus from the middle ear.

When should I come back and see the doctor?

If your symptoms do not clear up in 3 days or if they become much worse then you will need to see the doctor. Your hearing may become dulled for a week or so after the otitis media. If this persists then you will need to see the doctor.