



# Ear Infections and Conductive Hearing Loss

Patient and Family Education

This teaching sheet contains general information. Please talk with your child's doctor or pediatric audiologist to get more specific information. Call **813-262-1330** to schedule an appointment.

## What is an ear infection?

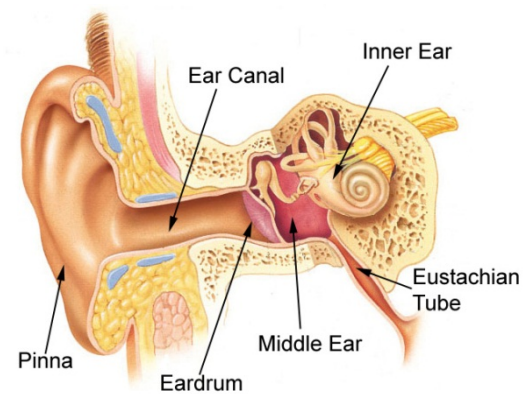
- An ear infection is an inflammation in the middle ear (the area behind the eardrum) that usually has a buildup of fluid. If the fluid sits in your child's ear long enough, bacteria may form in the fluid.
- Ear infections are the most frequently diagnosed disease in infants and young children.
- 75% of children experience at least one ear infection by their 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday.
- If your child has an ear infection, they may have a conductive hearing loss because sound is not able to pass through the fluid very well. Your child may have this type of hearing loss and you may not even know.
- Ear infections are the most common cause of conductive hearing loss in young children.

## Why does my child get so many ear infections?

- The Eustachian tube (a tube that connects the middle ear to the nose and throat) is small and horizontal in children.
- When fluid builds up in the middle ear space, the fluid does not have a place to drain because the tube is level with the ground.
- As your child gets older, their Eustachian tube will get bigger and angle downward. So, when fluid builds in this space, it will be able to drain out through this tube.

## What is a conductive hearing loss?

- A conductive hearing loss means that your child may not hear well at some or all pitches. But, your child's hearing nerve is functioning normally.
- This hearing loss is usually located in the outer or middle ears.
- It is usually a temporary hearing loss.
- It's related to fluid buildup behind the eardrum like an ear infection, a blocked ear tube, or wax blockage.
- Once the fluid in the ears disappears, the ear tube is opened, or the wax is removed, your child's hearing will usually return to normal.



## What are the possible symptoms of a conductive hearing loss?

Your child may have one or more of these:

- Not respond well to sounds
- Have poor speech articulation skills
- Have balance difficulties
- Turn music and/or the television up too loud
- Misunderstand directions
- Have difficulty telling the direction of where sounds come from

## What are the degrees or amounts of hearing loss that my child may have?

With a temporary conductive hearing loss, your child typically has a:

- Mild hearing loss: Your child will have trouble listening when it's noisy. He/she may miss a lot of consonant sounds and may not be able to hear f, s, or th sounds.
- Moderate hearing loss: Your child will only be able to understand speech if he/she can see the speaker's face.

## What is the treatment for a conductive hearing loss?

- Your child's Ear, Nose, and Throat (ENT) doctor can usually treat this type of hearing loss. If your child has an ear infection, they may have a hearing loss. When the ear infection resolves, their hearing may return to normal.