

Ear problems

Babies may develop some sort of ear problem at certain times. Most children have grown out of ear infections by the age of seven.

Most ear infections are caused by a virus which will get better by itself and will not need antibiotics. 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 painkillers from the pharmacist and extra cuddles may be all they will need.

Your child may have swollen glands in their neck - this is a sign of the body fighting the infection. Children who live in households where people smoke or who have a lot of contact with other children, like those who go to nursery, are more likely to get ear infections.

What are the signs of an ear infection?

The signs are a raised temperature, general irritability and pain or discomfort. 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).

Speak to your health visitor about safely cleaning your baby's ears as they can be easily damaged.

Download [A Guide for Parents and Carers of children from 0-5 years – Common childhood illnesses](#) for more useful information.

This information cannot replace specialist treatment. If you are still worried, contact NHS 111 or a doctor (e.g. your GP practice or walk-in centre).

Health visitor's advice

- Babies' ears need to be treated with extra care when cleaning
- Never use a cotton bud inside your child's ear
- If they have a temperature, wax may flow out
- Use a different, clean damp piece of cotton wool on each ear to gently clean around the outer area.

