

# HUNTINGTON PLAZA PEDIATRIC GROUP

## Ear Pain

Ear pain is a common symptom in all children. There are many different causes of ear pain. True ear infections cannot be diagnosed and treated appropriately over the phone and, as a result, supportive care should be administered until the child can be seen by a doctor (antibiotics cannot be prescribed over the phone). Pulling on the ears without any other symptoms is most often NOT a sign of an ear infection.

### **Inner Ear Infection**

**Cause:**

- Bacterial or viral
- Stagnant fluid in the middle ear is a set-up for bacterial growth
- Fluid is common in the middle ear when a child has a cold or nasal congestion
- Not caused by water getting in the ear from bathing or swimming (see outer ear infection)
- Inner ear infections are not contagious

**Cause:**

- Nasal congestion
- Fever
- Ear Pain
- Consider this diagnosis when a child has had a cold for several days then develops fever and ear pain.

**Treatment:**

- Watchful waiting- current recommendations
- recommend waiting 48 hours to see if the infection will resolve on its own in certain situations in children over 2 years old
- Oral Antibiotics
- Tylenol/Ibuprofen as needed for pain
- Numbing ear drops may be prescribed for ear pain not controlled by Tylenol or Ibuprofen

### **Nasal Congestion**

**Cause:**

- Ears and nose are connected by the Eustachian tube
- When your child has a stuffy nose the Eustachian tube clogs and they may feel pressure in their ears

**Symptoms:**

- Nasal congestion
- Pulling ears
- May have fever (from viral infection, not ear infection)

**Treatment:**

- Supportive care for the cold

### **Outer Ear Infection (Swimmer's Ear)**

**Cause:**

Water sits in the outer ear canal and, as it dries, irritates the skin in the canal and causes it to thin. This allows for bacterial penetration and a painful infection.

**Symptoms:**

- Ear pain, especially when pulling on the ear
- May have discharge from ear
- No other symptoms such as congestion or fever

**Treatment:**

- Antibiotic ear drops
- Tylenol or Ibuprofen for the pain if needed

**Prevention:**

- Thorough drying of ears after bathing or swimming

Call our office if:

- Pain persists or worsens
- Pain or fever lasts >48hours after starting antibiotics
- Swelling or redness behind the ear
- Stiff neck
- Vomiting
- Your child is acting sick