



DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Ear Infections

Ear infections are most common in children, but anyone can get them. Getting proper treatment can help you (or your child) recover quickly and have fewer unpleasant symptoms. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate your condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

Otitis Media	An infection of the middle ear. It's the most common type of ear infection.
Effusion	The term for fluid accumulating in the inner ear. It often accompanies a middle ear infection, in which case it's called otitis media with effusion.
Otitis Externa	An infection of the outer ear, often called "swimmers ear" because it's sometimes seen in people who spend a lot of time in the water.
Tympanic Membrane	The medical name for the ear drum. In a middle ear infection, fluid builds up behind the tympanic membrane.
Mastoiditis	A rare complication of an ear infection. It occurs when the infection spreads to the mastoid bone, which is a part of the skull that sits just behind the ear.
Eustachian Tubes	The eustachian tube connects the middle ear to the upper part of the throat. When the eustachian tube becomes blocked for any reason, an ear infection may develop. The angle of the eustachian tube is different in young children than it is in those over two years of age, and that makes it more difficult for them to drain. That's one of the reasons why young children are more susceptible to ear infections.
Otoscope	The instrument doctors use to see inside your ears and diagnose ear infections. Often, they'll use a pneumatic attachment, which is a rubber bulb that lets them apply light pressure to the ear drum, which can help with the diagnostic process.
Otalgia	The scientific term for ear pain, which is a common symptom of ear infections.
Otorrhea	Drainage from the ear, which can sometimes happen with an ear infection.
Labyrinthitis	A rare complication of an ear infection that involves inflammation of the inner ear and especially the vestibular system. That's the part of the inner ear that deals with balance, which is why an ear infection may sometimes cause dizziness.

