

# Infectious diseases A-Z: Does your child have ear pain?

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Is your child complaining of an earache? It could be an infection. Children are more prone to ear infections than adults, and they can be painful. Dr. Nipunie Rajapakse, a Mayo Clinic pediatric infectious diseases specialist says, "Ear infections can be caused by both viruses and bacteria. Some of the common cold viruses can cause inflammation of the middle ear.

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"There are common bacterial causes of [ear infection](#), as well, says Dr. Rajapakse. "The most common is called Streptococcus pneumoniae." These bacteria are spread through coughing, sneezing, and close contact with an infected person.

To prevent ear infections in children, you should:

- Practice good hand-washing.
- Ensure your [child](#) is up to date on vaccinations.
- Avoid secondhand smoke.
- Breast-feed your baby.

If you bottle-feed, hold your baby in an upright position.

Ear infections can be uncomfortable. If your child is having painful symptoms, there are ways to help. Dr. Rajapakse says, "If the child is having pain, medications like ibuprofen or acetaminophen can help to alleviate some of that pain." Many ear infections will get better on their own without needing an antibiotic—even if they are caused by bacteria. You should talk to your health care provider to see if watchful waiting is a good option for your child especially if he or she is generally healthy and his or her symptoms are mild.

Dr. Rajapakse says to always take your child to a [health care provider](#) if you are concerned or if symptoms persist.

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