

What is Otitis Media?

Otitis media is the medical name for middle ear infection. It is the biggest cause of hearing loss in children, especially in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Sometimes parents know their child has otitis media because they cry or pus might come out of their ears ('runny ear').

Sometimes parents only know something is wrong because their child isn't hearing as well as usual.

How common is Otitis Media?

On average, half of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school children could have otitis media and a hearing loss.

What effect can it have?

Otitis media can cause:

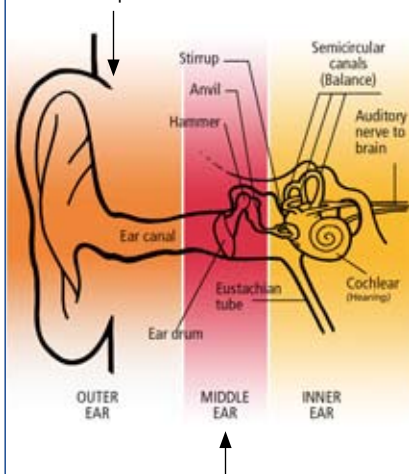
- Hearing loss
- Problems at school
- Unclear speech

How do you know if your child has otitis media?

Parents are often the first to notice if their child isn't hearing well. Look for to see if your child:

- Asks you to repeat yourself;
- Gets into trouble in class for doing the wrong thing;
- Distracts other children in class;
- Doesn't answer you;
- Doesn't understand what you've asked them to do; or
- Is hard to understand.

This is a picture of the ear.



This is the middle ear.

The middle ear should be filled with air. Otitis media is when the middle ear fills up with fluid. This can happen when the child gets a cold or a runny nose. The fluid causes a hearing loss until it clears away.

Otitis media can be sudden and painful and last a short time, or it can be painless and last for weeks or months ('glue ear').

Getting your child's ears checked

Ask at your Health Service about getting your child's ears and hearing checked.

A Hearing Health Worker can tell whether your child has ear or hearing problems by:

- Looking at your child's ear drums
- Checking the ear drum movement
- Testing hearing (if the child is over 3 years old)

If children are younger than 3 years old, they can have a hearing test at a community health centre, a hospital or at Australian Hearing (call 131 797).

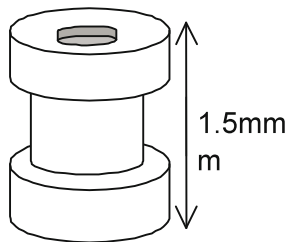
Management and treatment

Children learn new things every day. A few weeks or months with otitis media can mean missing out on learning many new things.

The earlier otitis media is treated, the easier it is to treat and the less likely it is to return.

Otitis media can be treated by a doctor. There are a few ways to do this:

1. They might first see if the otitis media goes away by itself in a short time.
2. Antibiotics can be given to treat otitis media if it doesn't go away.
3. If the fluid still doesn't go away, an Ear Specialist doctor could remove the fluid with a sucker and put grommets in the child's ear drums.



Grommets are tiny plastic tubes that let air through the eardrum into the middle ear. They help to stop fluid building up again. The eardrum usually pushes the grommet out and heals by itself after a year. A grommet is smaller than a match head.

How Australian Hearing can help

Australian Hearing provides Government subsidised services and the latest digital hearing aids to pensioner concession cardholders, most veterans, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples aged over 50 years or participating in a Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) or who have participated in a CDEP between 1 December 2005 and 30 June 2008, referred clients of an Australian Government funded vocational rehabilitation service and Australians up to the age of 21.

Visit our website on **www.hearing.com.au** or call **131 797** to be connected to your nearest Australian Hearing centre.



Australian Hearing provides the best hearing care, the latest in hearing aid technology and leads the world in hearing research.

listen up
LOOK AFTER YOUR EARS

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