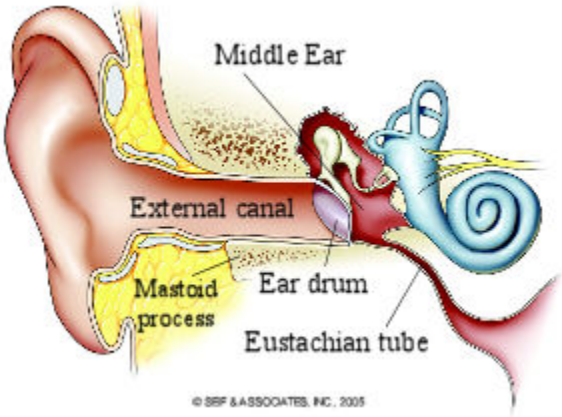
Mastoiditis

Mastoiditis is an infection that has spread from the middle ear to a bony area (the mastoid air cells) behind the middle ear. It is an uncommon complication of a middle ear infection. It occurs most often in young children. Treatment with the right *antibiotics* (medications that are used to treat bacteria germs) is generally effective. With the right treatment, there is a very high chance of full recovery.



SYMPTOMS

Some common symptoms of mastoiditis include:

- Pain, swelling, redness, warmth, or a tender mass of the bone behind the ear.
- Fever
- Fussiness and irritability.
- Redness and swelling of the ear lobe or ear.
- Ear drainage.
- Headache.

DIAGNOSIS

Your caregiver will make the diagnosis based on an exam and on questions about what you or your child have been feeling. Other tests that may be done include:

- Blood work
- Blood cultures or cultures of ear drainage
- X-rays.
- If you or your child has symptoms that suggest more serious problems, additional tests and/or specialized x-rays may be done. These could include:
  - CT (CAT) scans
  - Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)

TREATMENT

Treatment will be based on how serious the infection is and what will be expected to give the best outcome. The treatment required may be:

- Hospitalization and antibiotics given through a vein.
- An operation (*myringotomy*) is sometimes done to relieve the pressure from the middle ear. This is a surgical procedure where a small hole is cut into the ear drum. A small tube is then placed to keep the hole open and draining. The tubes usually fall out on their own after six to twelve months.
- In rare cases, if the above treatments do not work, more surgery may be necessary. This is called a mastoidectomy.

COMPLICATIONS

These are rare if proper treatment is started early. **These can include:**

- Facial paralysis
- Infection and possible destruction of the mastoid bone.
- Spread of infection to the neck.
- Hearing loss which can be partial or complete on the side of the infection.
- Infection spread to the brain.
- Clots or blockage of blood vessels in the neck or brain.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Take prescribed antibiotics and other medications as directed by your caregiver.

- Follow-up with an exam by an ENT (Ear, Nose, and Throat) specialist if recommended.
- A follow-up hearing test (audiogram) may be recommended.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop recurrent fevers of 100º F (37.8º C) or higher.
- You develop new headache, ear, or facial pain that had not happened before.
- You feel that there has been loss of hearing.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop fevers of 102º F (38.9º C) or as suggested by your caregiver.
- You develop severe headache, ear, or facial pain.
- You experience sudden hearing loss.
- You develop repeated episodes of vomiting.
- You develop weakness or drooping of one side of your face.
- You experience weakness of one arm, one leg, or on one side of your body.
- You develop sudden problems with speech and/or vision.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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