Otitis Media (Middle Ear Infection)

You or your child has otitis media. This is an infection of the middle chamber of the ear. This condition is common in young children and often follows colds. Symptoms of otitis media include earache and hearing loss. If the ear drum ruptures, a middle ear infection will also cause bloody or pus-like discharge from the ear. Fussiness may be the only sign of ear infection in small children.

Otitis media is most often due to a viral infection. **A virus usually does not require antibiotic treatment.** Treatment with an antibiotic for 5 to 10 days is needed to clear up the infection in about 1/3 of these infections. Ear drops or oral medicines may be prescribed to reduce pain, fever or congestion. Babies with ear infections should not be fed while lying on their backs. This increases the pressure and pain in the ear. **Do not** put cotton in the ear canal or clean it with cotton swabs. Swimming should not be allowed if the ear drum has ruptured or if there is drainage from the ear canal.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Take all medications as directed even though your child may feel better after the first few days.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort or fever as directed by your caregiver.

Otitis media can lead to complications including rupture of the ear drum, long term hearing loss and more severe infections. Call your caregiver for follow-up care at the end of treatment.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You or your child's problems (*symptoms*) do not improve within 2 to 3 days.
- You or your child has an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C), not controlled by medicine.
- Your baby is older than 3 months with a rectal temperature of 102º F (38.9º C) or higher.
- **Your baby is 3 months old or younger with a rectal temperature of 100.4º F (38º C) or higher.**
- Your child develops increased fussiness.
- You or your child develop a stiff neck, severe headache or confusion.
- There is swelling around the ear.
- There is dizziness, vomiting, unusual sleepiness, seizures or twitching of facial muscles.
- The pain or ear drainage persists beyond 2 days of antibiotic treatment.

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