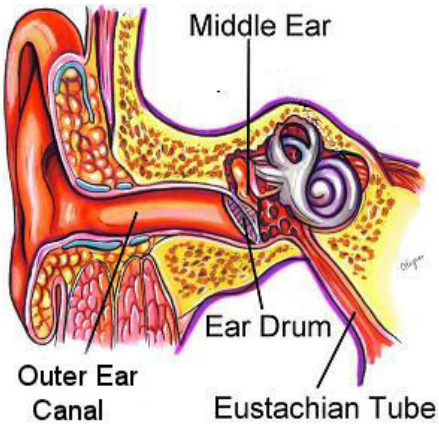
Swimmer's Ear
(Otitis Externa)

Otitis externa ("swimmer's ear") is a germ (*bacterial*) or fungal infection of the outer ear canal (from the eardrum to the outside of the ear). Swimming in dirty water may cause swimmer's ear. It also may be caused by moisture in the ear from water remaining after swimming or bathing. Often the first signs of infection may be itching in the ear canal. This may progress to ear canal swelling, redness, and pus drainage which may be signs of infection.



HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Apply the antibiotic drops to the ear canal as prescribed by your doctor.
- This can be a very painful medical condition. A strong pain reliever may be prescribed.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.
- If your caregiver has given you a follow-up appointment, it is very important to keep that appointment. Not keeping the appointment could result in a chronic or permanent injury, pain, hearing loss and disability. If there is any problem keeping the appointment, you must call back to this facility for assistance.

PREVENTION

- It is important to keep your ear dry. Use the corner of a towel to wick water out of the ear canal after swimming or bathing.
- Avoid scratching in your ear. This can damage the ear canal or remove the protective wax lining the canal and make it easier for germs (*bacteria*) or a fungus to grow.
- You may use ear drops made of rubbing alcohol and vinegar after swimming to prevent future "swimmer ear" infections. Make up a small bottle of equal parts white vinegar and alcohol. Put 3 or 4 drops into each ear after swimming.
- Avoid swimming in lakes, polluted water, or poorly chlorinated pools.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- An oral temperature above 100° F (37.8° C) develops, or as your caregiver suggests.
- Your ear is still painful after 3 days and shows signs of getting worse (redness, swelling, pain, or pus).

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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