

# What is Otitis Media?

**Otitis media** means middle ear infection.

Most children in Australia will get ear infections a few times in their childhood.

Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children will get middle ear infections too, but they often start younger, last longer and come back more often.

**An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child in Australia may have ear infections and trouble hearing for almost 3 years of their childhood and school years in total.**

A non-Indigenous child will have this problem for 2-3 months, on average.



## How children get ear infections.

**Runny noses** are full of the germs that cause ear infections. The germs travel up into our ears and cause the infection.

Children with runny noses can give the germs to other children and babies when they **cough or sneeze, cuddle or sleep** with them.

The germs get on children's **hands** too. Then children touch other children and the germs are shared around.

Germs spread easily, especially if children are **sharing beds**, and if there are more than two people sharing a room.

**Smoking** near children stops their ears from clearing the germs away properly.

Children who **don't eat enough fresh fruit and vegetables** are more likely to get ear infections because their bodies can't fight off the germs as well.

## Help your child hear



*If your child has an ear infection, they will not hear well.*

*Watch to see if they:*

- Say "What?" a lot
- Don't answer you
- Don't hear sounds that you can hear
- Get growled at for not doing what they were asked to.

*Talk to them **face to face**.*

*If your child is at school, tell the teacher when they are not hearing well.*

*The teacher will understand why your child may not always do what they ask.*

*Tell the teacher about talking face to face to your child.*

*Ask the teacher to stand close to your child when telling the class what to do.*

*If your child does not speak clearly, it can be because they do not hear clearly.*

*You can get your child's hearing tested at the local AMS, health service or hospital.*

*If children are under 3 years they can also come to Australian Hearing (call 131 797).*

**listen up**  
**LOOK AFTER YOUR EARS**

## What you can do



**Wipe runny noses** and keep children's faces clean. Teach them to **blow their noses**.



Show children how to **cough into their elbows**, not their hands.



**Wash hands** after blowing their noses and before eating. Teach children about hand washing.

Children should sleep in **separate beds**, especially when they have coughs and runny noses. Only two children should share a room.

**Smoke outside** the car or house, especially when there are children around. **Pregnant women shouldn't smoke.**

Make sure you and your children eat plenty of **fresh fruit and vegetables**. **Breast fed babies** fight off germs better.

**Take your child to the doctor** if their nose is always running, their ears are runny or smelly, or if they say their ears are sore.

If the doctor gives your child **medicine**, follow the instructions on how to take it.

Go back and see the doctor to **check that their ears are clear.**

If the ear infection goes on for more than 3 months, ask your doctor about seeing an **Ear Nose and Throat Specialist.**

## How Australian Hearing can help

**Australian Hearing** provides Government subsidised services and the latest digital hearing aids for eligible people. For full details of our eligibility criteria visit [www.hearing.com.au](http://www.hearing.com.au) or contact your nearest hearing centre on **131 797**.

## Contact us

Visit our website on [www.hearing.com.au](http://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.

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