



# Ear Infection (Otitis Media)

## After-Care Instructions

### General information

Infection of the middle ear is very common. An ear infection is NOT an emergency. An ear infection usually happens after a cold with congestion. Other than by a practitioner looking at it, there is no simple test to tell whether or not there is an infection. Also, the way the eardrum looks can change, so you may get different opinions on different visits. Pain in the ear does not always mean that there is an infection. Antibiotics are not always needed for ear pain. If it is after hours, you can treat the pain and bring the child to the clinic the next day.

### Caring for an ear infection after your visit to the Emergency Department

- Have the child sit up or hold him or her upright.
- Give the child acetaminophen (Tylenol™) or ibuprofen (Advil™, Pediprofen™).
- If your practitioner prescribed an antibiotic or pain medication, take it exactly as prescribed.
- Put warm moist washcloths over the outer ear to help relieve pain.

### When to call Kaiser Permanente

- If the ear pain is not gone after 3-4 days with home treatment.
- If severe pain has not gotten better after 12 hours of treatment.
- If white, yellow, or bloody liquid is coming from the ear.
- If you suspect the child has a problem hearing after being sick or having an infection.

### When to return to an Emergency Department

- If the child develops a stiff neck.
- If the child develops a severe headache.
- If the child is getting worse or is unusually sleepy.

### Other instructions (if needed):

**If you think you have a medical or psychiatric emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest hospital.**

Emergency services and care are covered if you were experiencing acute symptoms of sufficient severity, including severe pain, such that you reasonably believed that a failure to obtain immediate medical attention could result in serious jeopardy to health, serious impairment to bodily functions, or serious dysfunction of any bodily organ or part.

For information on this and over 180 other health topics, see your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*. If you need a copy, please call 1-800-464-4000.