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EAR: OTITIS EXTERNA (Swimmer's Ear)

"Swimmer's ear" is an infection of the skin in the outer ear canal. This is the area from the eardrum to the outside of the ear (Picture 1). The medical term for the condition is otitis externa (Oh-TIE-tis ex-TER-nuh). It is called "swimmer's ear" because it is usually caused by bacteria or fungus found in swimming pools. Swimming in dirty water or in pools with chlorine may cause otitis externa. Other causes may be skin allergies, past ear infections, or too much wetness in the ear.

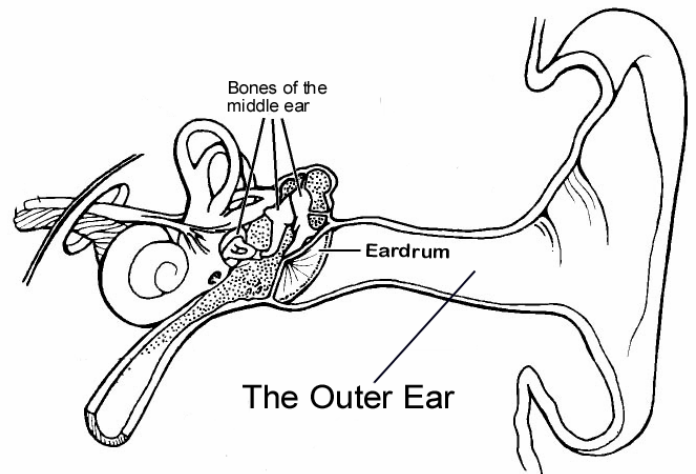
SYMPTOMS OF SWIMMER'S EAR

Your child may complain of itching or pain in one or both ears. The ear may feel plugged up, or have pus coming out of the ear. Some children also have a fever or some loss of hearing for a short time.

TREATMENT

Your child's doctor will examine your child's ears and gently clean them.

- An antibiotic (an-ti-bi-AH-tik) ear medicine may be prescribed to fight the infection.
- Give your child acetaminophen, such as Tylenol®, for pain. *Do not give aspirin.*



Picture 1 Inside the ear.

HOW TO USE WARM COMPRESSES

Warm compresses (packs) may help to ease the pain. To use the warm compresses:

1. Wet a folded washcloth in comfortably warm (not hot) water, and wring out the excess water.
2. Have your child hold the warm washcloth over the ear several times a day for 10 to 15 minutes each time. The best times may be before school, after school, after dinner, and at bedtime.
3. When the compress cools, wet the washcloth again with warm water. You will probably need to wet the washcloth 3 or 4 times during a 15-minute treatment.
4. Use a clean washcloth every day. Launder the washcloth before it is used again.

ACTIVITY

It is important to keep the ear dry. After swimming, dry the ear with rubbing alcohol or white vinegar.

- No swimming is allowed until your child is completely pain-free.
- Showers _____ . Your child should wear a shower cap when showering.

MEDICATION STORAGE AND SAFETY

- **Store all medicine out of children's reach.**
- Keep a list of what medicines your child takes and when and why they are taken.
- If this medicine is a liquid, keep it in the refrigerator to help improve its taste.
- Always keep medicine in the labeled container it came in.
- Do not use this medicine after the expiration date printed on the container.
- Do not stop giving this medicine or change the amount given without first talking with your child's doctor.
- Do not give this medicine to anyone other than the child for whom it was prescribed.
- If your child sees a new doctor or goes to an emergency room, be sure to tell them about all the medicines your child is taking.
- If your child is having dental work done, be sure to tell the dentist that your child is taking this medicine.
- Your child's school will need a note from you and the doctor if this medicine is to be given at school by the school nurse.
- **If your child or someone else takes too much of this medicine, first call the Central Ohio Poison Center at (614) 228-1323 or 1-800-682-7625. They will tell you what to do.**
- **Do not give Syrup of Ipecac unless told to do so by the Poison Center or your doctor.**

WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR

Call your child's doctor if your child has any of the following:

- Pain that is not eased by ear drops or heat, or that lasts more than 2 days.
- Any discharge from the ear
- Redness or swelling of the outer ear or behind the earlobe.
- Temperature over 101°F by mouth or 102°F under the arm.
- Any problems with giving the medicine.

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your child's doctor or nurse.