

5 things you may not know about ... ear infections

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McClatchy/Tribune

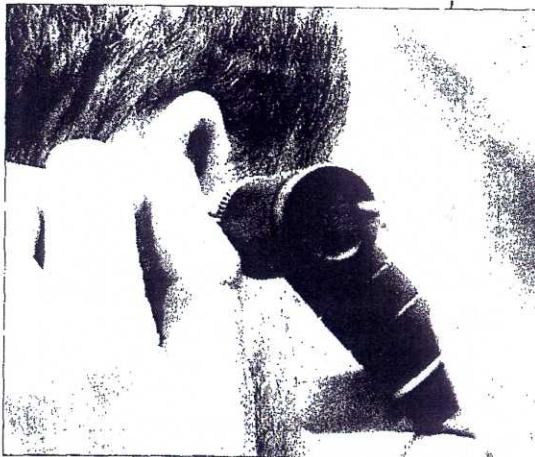
1. The season: Ear infections are most common during cough/cold season from October-March, when fluid lingering in the ear after a cold or flu becomes infected with bacteria or a virus, says Dr. Jerome Klein, professor of pediatrics at Boston University School of Medicine.

2. Symptoms: Common signs of an ear infection include fever, irritability, rubbing the ear, decreased hearing and fluid coming out of the ear, Klein says.

3. Watch, wait: Fluid that doesn't bother children and goes away on its own does not have to be treated with antibiotics, unless it lasts for a few months, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

4. Detection: EarCheck Middle Ear Monitor is a new over-the-counter gadget that can detect and track middle ear fluid. It rates ear fluid on a scale of 1-5, with level 1 indicating an infection is unlikely and levels 3-5 indicating a high likelihood of infection, in which case a pediatrician should be consulted. More info: www.earcheck.com.

5. Prevention: Some ear infections may be prevented by practicing good hygiene, such as frequent hand-washing; enrolling your child in day-care programs that house fewer children; maintaining immunizations; and breast feeding.



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