



# What is a Swimmer's Ear?

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An ear infection forms when bacteria and viruses grow in the middle ear (behind the eardrum). But with *swimmer's ear*, the middle ear is fine while the skin lining the ear canal is infected.

Children with *swimmer's ear* have ear pain (especially on movement of the outer ear), and sometimes discharge from the ear.

If needed, middle ear infections will be treated with oral antibiotics. **Swimmer's ear is treated with antibiotic eardrops.** Avoid underwater swimming for a few days until the infection heals.

Water in the ear has no effect on a middle ear infection, but water bacteria cause *swimmer's ear*. Ear plugs are helpful to prevent *swimmer's ear* only if a proper seal is formed. We do not recommend earplugs for most children swimming in pools, and they may have trouble hearing the lifeguard! We prefer **2% acetic acid drops** (OTC *swimmer's eardrops*) before and after swimming for prevention of *swimmer's ear*. We also remind parents that *Q-tips* should not be used in the ear. Children with too much earwax may benefit from having the wax removed as it may trap water bacteria in the ear canal.

We hope you find our Parentletter helpful and informative. Please keep in mind that receipt of this newsletter does not create a doctor/patient relationship and that it is not meant to serve as a substitute for professional medical advice. For particular pediatric medical concerns, including decisions about diagnoses, medications and other treatments, or if you have any questions after reading this newsletter, we encourage you to speak with your child's pediatrician.

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