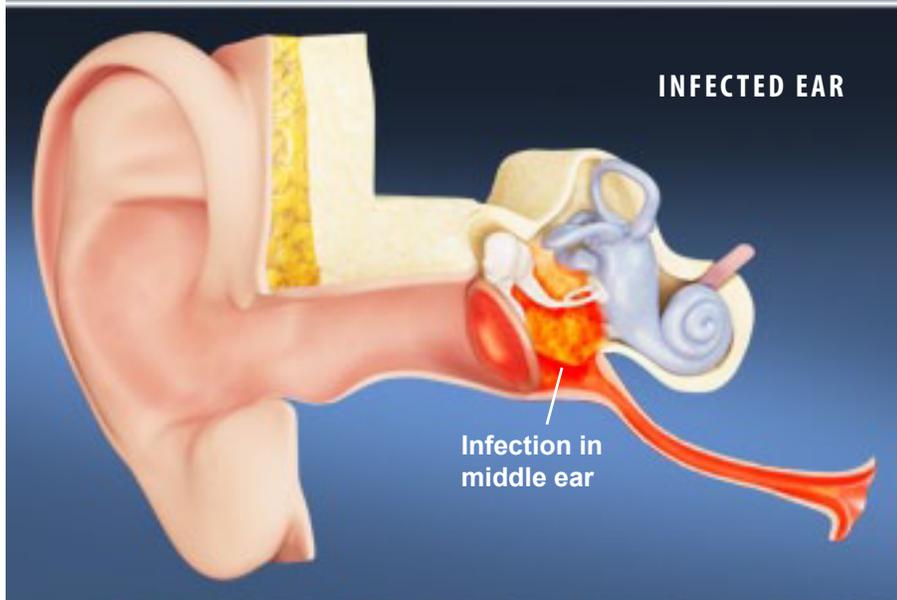
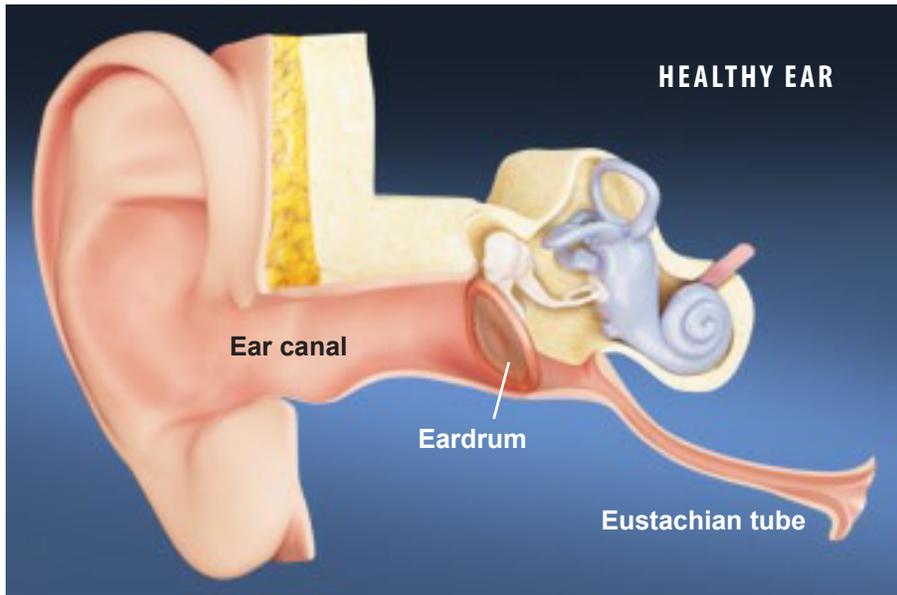


Chronic Ear Infections in Children



Overview

An ear infection is a buildup of germs behind the eardrum, in the part of the ear called the "middle ear." For some infants and young children, ear infections are a continuing problem. They can come back again and again. We call these "chronic" ear infections.

Causes

Ear infections in children are linked to their eustachian tubes. These are passageways that travel from the middle ear to the back of the throat. There's one in each side of your head. In children, these tubes are short and narrow. And, they are positioned more horizontally than they are in adults. For these reasons, some children's eustachian tubes tend to become blocked easily. This can trap germs in the middle ear, causing an ear infection.

Symptoms

An ear infection can cause swelling and fluid buildup in the middle ear. This causes pain and pressure. It can interfere with hearing. A child with an ear infection may have a fever. A baby may be fussy. An infected ear may drain fluid. A severe ear infection can permanently damage hearing.

Treatment

Ear infections often resolve on their own without treatment. Very young children, or those with a severe infection, may be given an antibiotic. Ear tube surgery can help an infected ear drain better. If these don't clear up the infections, other surgeries may help. Your healthcare provider can create a plan that is right for you.