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Don't let swimmer's ear keep you out of the water

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AAP News Parent Plus

INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

Don't let swimmer's ear keep you out of the water

Swimming is a great way for kids to stay active, especially during the summer months. However, the combination of heat, humidity and water can lead to an ear condition called acute otitis externa, more commonly known as swimmer's ear.

The infection often is caused by bacteria being carried into the outer ear canal. Symptoms of swimmer's ear include redness, swelling, itching, drainage of pus and pain.

Following are some tips from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to prevent and treat swimmer's ear: Keep your ears as dry as possible.

- Use a bathing cap, ear plugs or custom-fitted swim molds when swimming to keep water out of ears.

Dry your ears thoroughly after swimming or showering.

- Use a towel to dry your ears well.
- Tilt your head and hold each ear facing down to allow water to escape the ear canal.
- Pull your earlobe in different directions while the ear is faced down to help water drain out.
- If water is still in the ears, consider using a hair dryer to move air within the ear canal. Be sure the hair dryer is on the lowest heat and speed/fan setting, and hold it several inches from the ear.



Don't put objects, including cotton-tip swabs, pencils, paperclips or fingers, in the ear canal.

Don't try to remove ear wax. It helps protect your ear canal from infection.

- If you think the ear canal is blocked by ear wax, consult your pediatrician rather than trying to remove it yourself.

Consult your pediatrician about using commercial alcohol-based ear drops or a 1:1 mixture of rubbing alcohol and white vinegar after swimming.

- Drops should not be used by people with ear tubes, damaged ear drums, outer ear infection or ear drainage (pus or liquid coming from the ear).

Consult your pediatrician if your ears are itchy, flaky, swollen or painful, or if you have drainage from your ears.

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