

## What is an ear infection?

An ear infection can occur in the “middle ear”. The middle ear is the part of the ear immediately to the inside of the ear drum. The middle ear is connected to the nose and throat by the eustachian tube.

Sometimes the eustachian tube can become swollen and blocked with mucous and fluid, trapping bacteria or viruses in the middle ear. The bacteria or virus can then cause an infection in the middle ear. An ear infection is also called otitis media, and is often the result of having another condition such as the cold, flu or allergies.



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**Phone: 218-726-8155**  
**Fax: 218-726-6132**

**Hours:**  
**September through May**

8:00am - 4:00pm, MTWF  
9:00am - 4:00pm, Thursday

**Summer Hours**

9:00am - 3:00pm, M-F

# *Ear Infection*

**Signs and Symptoms**

**Treatment**

**Prevention**

UMD Health Services

Nurse care line: 218-726-7870

To make an appointment: 218-726-8155

[www.d.umn.edu/hlthserv](http://www.d.umn.edu/hlthserv)



## Signs and Symptoms

It is important to get an accurate diagnosis and prompt treatment if you think you have the signs and symptoms of an ear infection.

Call the nurse care line or make an appointment if you experience:

- Moderate to severe ear pain
- Diminished hearing
- Fluid, pus or bloody discharge from the ear
- Sore throat

## Treatment

*Most ear infections go away on their own.*

*You can treat the pain with a pain reliever, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen (Tylenol).*

*Taking a decongestant, such as Sudafed, can decrease congestion in the ear.*

*You may also apply a heating pad or warm washcloth to the ear and rest.*

*Your medical provider may prescribe an antibiotic. Be sure to take the full course of antibiotics. If you do not notice improvement within 72 hours, or if symptoms worsen, call the nurse care line for further instructions.*

## Prevention

Most ear infections result from having another illness such as the cold or flu. To prevent an ear infection, the best course of action is to prevent the cold or flu by:

- ✓ Washing hands frequently
- ✓ Eating and sleeping well
- ✓ Drinking plenty of fluids
- ✓ Avoiding community shared food and drink containers

Ear infections can also result from having allergies. Allergy medications can help alleviate the congestion that may lead to an ear infection.

It is also a good idea to avoid smoking or smoke exposure, as this acts as an irritant to the nasal passages and throat, and can lead to an ear infection.