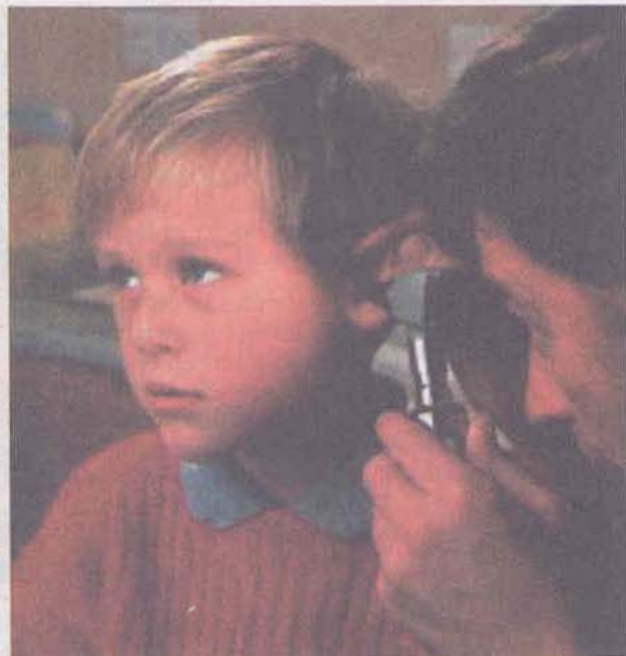


## What should I do if my child continues to get ear infections?

Children who have persistent fluid in the ear or who get one ear infection after another (as many as four infections in six months) and have noticeable hearing loss may be candidates for preventive treatment. One option is to keep these children on a low dose of antibiotics, which has been shown to reduce the frequency of ear infections. Another option is to surgically insert pressure-equalization (PE) tubes in the child's eardrums. In this procedure, called a tympanostomy, a small incision is made in the child's eardrum, and a tiny plastic tube is fit into the slit to act as a ventilator, allowing air into the middle ear and decreasing the risk of harmful bacteria becoming trapped there. The tubes require almost no special care, other than keeping water out of your child's ears, and usually fall out on their own within 6 to 18 months.

## Can there be complications as a result of my child's ear infections?

Frequent ear infections or those that go untreated may lead to persistent hearing loss, which can cause speech delays in a young child. Since normal hearing is critical for speech and language development in the first three years of life, it's important to contact your paediatrician if you suspect an ear infection in your child. In rare cases, untreated ear infections can lead to serious complications, such as mastoiditis (an infection of the skull behind the ear), meningitis (an inflammation of the membranes around the brain and spinal cord), balance problems, and permanent hearing loss.



**Frequent ear infections or those that go untreated may lead to persistent hearing loss, which can cause speech delays in a young child.**

## How to prevent Ear Infection

**Breastfeed.** Breastfeeding can play a role in preventing ear infections by passing along immunities and helping the tube in the inner ear function better. In fact, the longer you breastfeed, the less likely your child will suffer from ear infections.

**Don't smoke.** Living with second-hand tobacco smoke can increase your child's risk for ear infections by up to 50 percent! Studies show that the particles in tobacco can congest the tube in the inner ear. This congestion prevents the tube from being able to drain fluid and sets a child up for an ear infection.

Even if you only smoke outdoors, your baby can be exposed to those dust particles from your hair or your clothing.

Avoid giving your baby a bottle while he's lying down. When a baby is sucking and swallowing while in a horizontal position, the tubes of his inner ear begin to open, allowing fluids and germs from the throat to get into the middle ear. It's these fluids and germs that can "infect" the ear. If you're bottle-feeding your baby, try to hold him as upright as possible while he's feeding and avoid letting him take a bottle to bed.

Prevent the common cold. Just as tobacco particles can cause congestion that leads to ear infections, so can the common cold. Limit your baby's exposure to large crowds and avoid having her held by people who are sick. Once your child gets older, encourage her to wash her hands often, especially before touching her eyes, nose, or mouth.

*Source: The Internet*