

Pediatric Health Care

Dr. Lori Gara-Matthews

65 Walnut Street Suite 310
Wellesley, MA 02481
Tel: 781-772-1527
Fax: 781-772-1497

Swimmer's Ear

Swimmer's Ear refers to inflammation of the external part of your child's ear. Bacterial infection is the most common cause of swimmer's ear. Swimming or other water exposure is a well-documented risk factor for swimmer's ear.

What You Might See

The most common symptoms of swimmer's ear are ear pain, complaints of itchy ears, discharge, and hearing loss. It is important to tell your primary care provider about any previous instances of ear drum perforation, previous ear infections or water exposure in the past few days if your child has any of the above symptoms.

Treatment

Treatment of swimmer's ear aims to reduce pain and eliminate the infection. If the infection is severe or your child's eardrum is ruptured, you will be referred to an ear-nose-and-throat specialist (an otolaryngologist) for an examination and treatment.

Ear drops are usually prescribed to reduce pain and swelling caused by swimmer's ear. It is important to apply the ear drops correctly so that they reach the ear canal-

Have your child lie on their side, or tilt their head to the opposite shoulder. Place the ear drops in the ear canal. Have your child lie on their side for twenty minutes, or place a cotton ball in the ear canal for the same length of time. Finish the entire course of treatment, even if your child starts to feel better. We cannot stress the importance of this enough.

Prevention

If you or your child feels that you need to clean excessive wax from your ears, talk to their healthcare provider first. S/he may want to examine your ears to see if the ear wax is excessive, and we can give recommendations on how to do it.

The ear is self-cleaning; fingers, towels, Q-tips, and other devices should not be used to clean the inside of the ears.

If your child swims frequently, the following tips may help to reduce the chance of swimmer's ear: have your child shake their ears after swimming; some children do well with ear plugs made especially for swimming, or over the counter ear drops applied after swimming may help to reduce the incidence of swimmer's ear.