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# Battling Ear Infections

## Diagnosing and Treating This Common Childhood Illness • BY STEPHANIE THURROTT

Other than wellness checkups, what's the most common reason children see their doctors? If you guessed ear infections, you're right—and you're probably a parent whose child has had at least one.

Ear infections often appear when a child has a cold, a sinus infection or a sore throat, explains Rajiv Pandit, M.D., an ear, nose and throat surgeon (ENT)

less-mature immune systems and may develop problems after fluid flows into the middle ear, for example, when drinking from a bottle while lying down.

Since young children often cannot tell you where it hurts, watch for these ear infection symptoms:

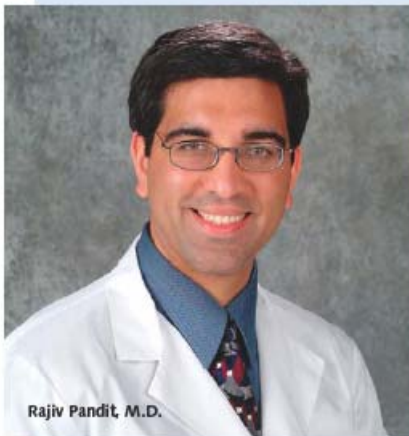
- ▶ Pulling or rubbing the ears
- ▶ Fever, nausea or vomiting
- ▶ Ear drainage
- ▶ Difficulty hearing
- ▶ Changes in appetite or sleeping patterns

"See your physician if you suspect that your child has an ear infection. If your child's ears are infected, treatment can begin immediately," Dr. Pandit says.

Antibiotics are the most effective treatment for bacterial ear infections. Decongestants are also frequently used in an attempt to open the Eustachian tubes and drain the fluid from the middle ear.

For some children, antibiotics and decongestants aren't enough to permanently remove the fluid. In these cases, an ENT physician can drain the fluid and place tiny pressure equalization (PE) tubes in the ears. These tubes will allow the air to enter the middle ear and help prevent the fluid from collecting. The surgery lasts approximately 15 minutes and is performed with a microscope under light anesthesia. These tubes fall out of the eardrum on their own, usually six months to two years later.

▶ For more information about childhood ear infections and how Baylor Waxahachie can help, call 1-800-4BAYLOR. You can also log on to [BaylorHealth.com](http://BaylorHealth.com) and do a search for "ear infections."



Rajiv Pandit, M.D.

on the medical staff at Baylor Medical Center at Waxahachie. That's because there's a connection between the throat and the middle ear called the Eustachian tube. This tube keeps the ear ventilated, but can also provide a passage for bacteria and viruses to enter the middle ear.

As just about any parent can tell you, children are more likely than adults to develop ear infections. That's because the Eustachian tubes aren't fully developed in children and are not as steeply angled, allowing germs to travel through them more easily. Plus, children have