

# EAR PAIN



Ear pain really hurts. I remember getting earaches as a kid, and they were not fun! But it might be your ear...or not.

First, is it an infection? There are 2 types of ear infections: middle ear (usually caused by a cold or upper respiratory infection), and outer ear (AKA swimmer's ear). You can get swimmer's ear even when not swimming in the Gulf! You can get it in the shower...mind blown. If water gets in, it can get trapped behind some earwax and lead to infection and pain. Antibiotic drops work for both, but if it's from a cold, etc, it will probably go away on its own.

Earwax can build up which can lead to a gradual muffling of hearing, pressure, itching, and discomfort. **Do not use a Q-tip.** It can push the wax deeper and can damage your ear canal. Try a few drops of hydrogen peroxide in the ear instead. (it tickles)  
But your ear pain might not have anything to do with your ears!

TMJ is one of the most common causes of referred ear pain in older adults. Have your dentist check it out. It's a jaw and joint issue. Not the kind you smoke, either.

Speaking of dentists, you may need to see them if you have pain radiating to your ears from an untreated cavity or gum infection. Bonus-- teeth, gum AND ear pain!

The stiffness and pain in your neck or jaw from arthritis may cause pain in your ears. Because it's not enough to have arthritis pain in your fingers, hands, joints, etc... let's add in our ears!  
In rare cases (thank heavens) referred ear pain can be a sign of cancer in the throat, tongue, or tonsils. Again, I stress rare, so don't panic, but have your doctor rule it out.

Can you hear me now?