

EAR, NOSE AND THROAT ASSOCIATES OF CHESTER COUNTY

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EAR CANAL INFECTIONS

(EXTERNAL OTITIS, SWIMMER'S EAR)

>>PATIENT INSTRUCTIONS >>

- Do not allow moisture into your infected ear- especially during showers, washing your hair, washing your ears, or using hair spray. Swimming must be avoided until the infection is completely clear; ear plugs are unsatisfactory during this time. You may wash your ears with a *well wrung out* wash cloth so that they appear clean to others, but this must be the limit of cleaning. When you wash your hair, place a plug of cotton mixed with Vaseline in the outer ear to completely block the ear canal. Remove this after you finish.
- ***Absolutely avoid*** scratching with nails or cleaning your ears with a cotton-tipped applicator, hair pin, pencil, eraser or finger. If you do this unconsciously during sleep, a one-inch wide paper tape or other device covering the ear must be utilized to prevent scratching at night.
- If ear drops have been prescribed, ***apply these at body temperature***. Drop them into your ear canal as you were directed, lying down with the affected ear up for a couple of minutes. Do not touch the ears with the dropper. When you arise, some of the solution will drain out. To prevent this from dripping onto your clothing, place some cotton in the outer ear for 15 minutes. Many of the drops which are prescribed are oily and might stain your clothing. Despite the fact that some of the medication drains out, its purpose is accomplished by coating the ear canal.
- If a plug or wick has been placed in your ear canal, apply the drops on top of it. ***DO NOT*** remove the wick.
- If ointment or cream has been prescribed, it should be placed on the end of a shortened cotton-tip applicator and gently dabbed into the outer portion of the ear canal and the surrounding area. Do not scratch or clean with a cotton-tip applicator.
- Your ear may ache, feel numb, feel full, or swell. These symptoms usually persist for several days until the treatment has become effective and the infection has cleared. Warm, dry compresses applied carefully to the outer ear may give some relief. Do not use moist or hot compresses.

If the pain is severe and not relieved by pain medications available to you (such as Motrin or Acetaminophen), please call our office at 610-363-2532. If you have any questions concerning your comfort or care, please contact us.