



# A FAMILY'S GUIDE TO Ear Infections & Temporary Conductive Hearing Loss



**What can cause temporary or fluctuating hearing loss?**

In children, ear infections are the most common cause of temporary and/or fluctuating hearing loss.



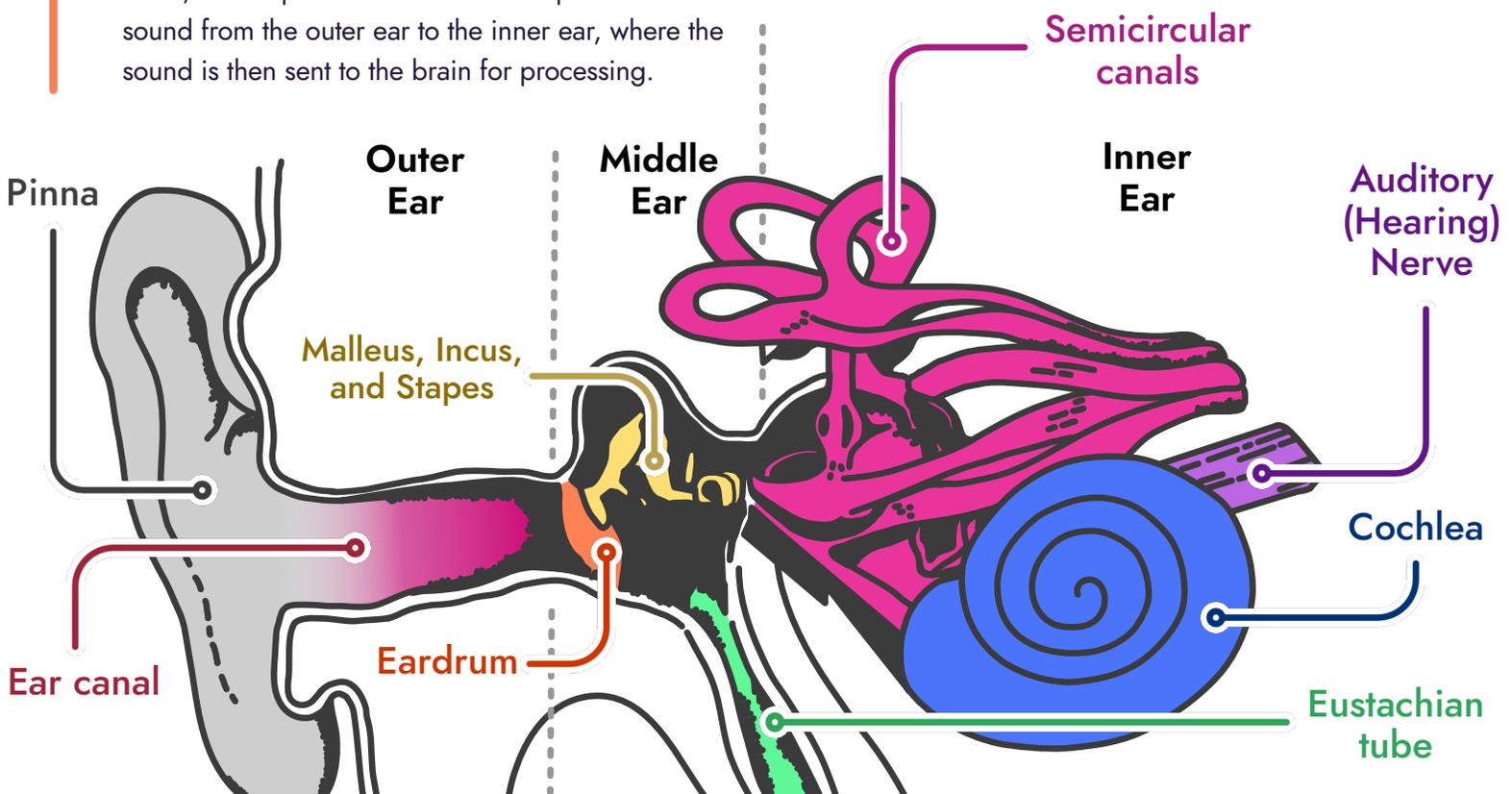
**What is the middle ear?**

There are three parts of the ear: the outer, middle, and inner ear. The middle ear consists of the eardrum, and the middle ear space, which is a cavity that houses the three middle ear bones: the malleus, incus, and stapes. The middle ear helps to transfer sound from the outer ear to the inner ear, where the sound is then sent to the brain for processing.

**What happens when the middle ear is not working as expected?**



Ear infections (sometimes referred to as otitis media) are the most common issue that can result from a change in middle ear function. An ear infection involves fluid caught in the middle ear space. The fluid itself is not always infected. When it is infected, it is referred to as acute otitis media. Many children experience middle ear fluid that is not infected, but can still affect hearing. Repeated ear infections are often referred to as chronic otitis media.





## How do ear infections impact hearing and communication?

Ear infections often result in temporary and/or fluctuating hearing loss. This is due to the fluid preventing sound from reaching the inner ear. As a result, children can experience inconsistent access to sound, which can impact their spoken language and auditory development.

—provider any time you suspect your child has an ear infection, especially if they have them frequently.

If your child is diagnosed with temporary conductive hearing loss, be sure to return to the audiologist after treatment to make sure your child's hearing has improved.



## What are some signs that a child may have an ear infection?

Young children may touch or pull on their ears when they have an ear infection. They may also be inconsolable or fussier than usual. Babies with middle ear problems might resist being laid down on their back.

In older children, parents may notice inconsistent responses to spoken language, difficulty finding where a sound comes from, or the need for frequent repetition.

## How can I communicate with my child when their hearing is impacted by an ear infection?



Gain your child's attention before talking to them.

Be face to face as much as possible when talking.

Being within 3 feet of your child will greatly improve their access to your message.

Repeat others' messages within 3 feet of your child so they have access to the language used around them.

Talk as much as possible around your child throughout each day to provide many opportunities to learn language.

Turn off music, TV, fans, and any loud appliances in the environment when possible.



## What to do if you suspect your child has an ear infection?

Contact your child's pediatrician for a diagnosis and to determine treatment options. They may refer you to the audiologist and/or an ear, nose, and throat (ENT) physician, also known as an otolaryngologist, for further support.

Ear infections, when left untreated, can cause damage to the middle ear. Additionally, the temporary hearing loss that ear infections can cause will impact a child's language development. It is important to follow-up with a medical—

## What are next steps if my child has conductive hearing loss due to an ear infection?



Children with hearing loss due to ear infections will be referred to their primary care provider or an ENT, who will determine the best course of treatment.

For some children, hearing technology might be recommended to support their listening needs. Your child's audiologist will discuss their recommendations with you, if your child is a candidate.

