

TIPS FOR MANAGING RECURRENT OUTER EAR INFECTION

Tips for keeping your outer ear healthy

- Keep the ear dry when exposed to water. Try cotton wool with vaseline for the shower - a disposable ear plug reduces the risk of cross infections
- Reduce cotton bud tip manipulation.
- Topical vinegar (acetic acid) and rubbing alcohol in a 1:1 concentration, 3 drops twice a day, reduces the pH of the ear. This makes the ear canal environment more acidic and discourages bacterial and fungal growth.
- Hair dry the ear canal after each shower or swim (to dehumidify the ear canal). Patients with recurrent ear infections, often have a more humid ear canal which encourages bacterial or fungal growth.
- Try regular olive oil (with a rubber nipple glass bottle eye dropper), one to two drops daily to allow the wax to extrude more easily.
- Treat acute flare ups with antibiotics or anti-fungal ear drop preparations (as prescribed by GP or specialist).
- Elocon 0.1 % ointment can be used for allergic irritation (often associated with eczema, dermatitis or psoriasis of the ear canal).
- A Low allergy food diet – avoiding cow's milk, eggs, gluten for 3 months as a trial, has been shown to be useful in some patients.
- Avoid nickel jewellery (nickel is a common cause of contact dermatitis, which can worsen outer ear infections).
- Check for low grade fungal infections in rest of body (nails, scalp, skin). These infections can setup an allergic inflammatory reaction in the rest of the body.
- Blood tests for rare immune conditions may need to be performed in very stubborn cases.
- If you have had recurrent ear infections for several months, sometimes a biopsy needs to be performed to exclude the rare chance of cancer in the ear canal.