

# Kids and Fluid in the Middle Ear

## What causes fluid in the middle ear?

Fluid may build up in the middle ear for two reasons:

- When a child has a cold, the middle ear makes fluid or mucus—just like the nose does. Some of this fluid gets trapped behind the eardrum.
- Many children continue to have fluid behind the eardrum for a while after a middle ear infection is cured.



## Signs that your child may have fluid in the middle ear:

Middle ear fluid usually does not bother children. Some children with middle ear fluid complain of a funny feeling in their ear, slight difficulty in hearing, or dizziness. These symptoms go away as the fluid disappears.



Antibiotics are not very helpful for middle ear fluid. They are sometimes tried if the middle ear fluid is still present after a few months. If the fluid does not go away, your doctor may also suggest that your child have a hearing test or see an ear, nose and throat doctor.

## What your doctor will do:

Your child's doctor most likely will suggest that the best treatment is to wait and see what happens, since fluid in the middle ear usually goes away on its own.

If the fluid is still present in 2–3 months, the doctor may check your child's hearing. If there is persistent fluid with hearing loss, he or she may suggest that your child be seen by an ear, nose and throat doctor, who will evaluate whether ear tubes that drain fluid from the ears are needed.

## What you can do to help your child:

- Make sure you keep all follow-up appointments with your child's doctor.
- Call your doctor if your child develops a fever or ear pain.
- If your child is having temporary hearing problems, ask the teacher to move your child closer to the front of the room.



**Remember!**  
Always use  
antibiotics wisely.

For more information about the REACH Mass Project, call toll-free 1-866-281-8906. Or, visit the Web site at [www.reachmass.org](http://www.reachmass.org).

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