

Ear Infections and Hearing Loss

By Amy Bentley



Dr. Nguyen Pham
CHOC Ear, Nose and
Throat Specialist

Dr. Pham specializes in pediatric otolaryngology - head and neck surgery. Dr. Pham completed his residency at the UC Davis Medical Center and a fellowship at Stanford University. He practiced advanced surgical techniques in airway reconstruction, otological surgery and the treatment of congenital defects at Stanford's Lucille Packard Children's Hospital. Dr. Pham has participated in many humanitarian endeavors, including a medical mission to perform cleft lip and palate surgeries in the Philippines and helping patients in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Dr. Pham speaks fluent Vietnamese.

Dr. Pham's philosophy of care: "My philosophy is to truly listen to my patients and to provide compassionate care based on the best possible scientific evidence."

EDUCATION:
UC Irvine School of Medicine

BOARD CERTIFICATIONS:
Otolaryngology

EAR INFECTION SYMPTOMS

An ear infection is an acute inflammation of the middle ear caused by fluid and bacteria behind the eardrum. "Usually it starts with a cold, so the child will have a runny nose and a cough. Colds can lead to ear infections in susceptible children," says Dr. Nguyen Pham, an ear, nose and throat specialist at CHOC Children's. "Older kids will pull on their ears and tell you their ears hurt. For infants, symptoms can include fever, irritability, or changes in their eating and sleeping patterns. A pediatrician can look at the eardrum to diagnose an ear infection." Generally, ear infections are treated with oral antibiotics.

PROTECT LITTLE EARS

"The best thing families can do is to have really good hand hygiene," says Dr. Pham. "Everyone should wash hands constantly. Encourage children to not touch their faces with their hands or rub their eyes," he says. Colds and the flu can frequently lead to ear infections, so children should be protected against colds and get a flu vaccine, Dr. Pham advises.



HEARING LOSS HELP

"An acute ear infection can lead to temporary hearing loss because of the fluid behind the eardrum. That type of hearing loss will get better over several weeks. If it doesn't get better, that's the time to go to the pediatrician or a specialist," says Dr. Pham. If you suspect your child has hearing loss, ask for an audiogram, which is a formal hearing test. A pediatrician can perform this test or refer the child to a specialist such as an audiologist or otolaryngologist.

IS THERE AN EFFECTIVE, PREVENTATIVE SURGICAL TREATMENT FOR CHILDREN WITH FREQUENT EAR INFECTIONS?

Children who have four or more ear infections per year meet the criteria to have ear tubes inserted into the eardrum. Ear tubes create a drainage pathway for bacteria behind the eardrum to get out, so infections don't form. This is a commonly performed surgery in the U.S. and is very effective in preventing ear infections.



Emergency Care Just for Kids

The Julia and George Argyros Emergency Department at CHOC Children's Hospital is exclusively dedicated to the treatment of pediatric patients. Our 22,000-square-foot, full-service emergency department is designed to meet the unique medical and emotional needs of children—from fragile newborns to sturdy teens. Our board-certified emergency medicine physicians and our specially trained nurses provide the very best patient- and family-centered care 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Learn more at
choc.org/emergency

3 in 1,000

NUMBER OF BABIES BORN IN THE U.S. WITH PERMANENT HEARING LOSS

10

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN IN THE U.S. WITH SOME HEARING LOSS



90

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN WHO WILL HAVE AT LEAST ONE EAR INFECTION BY THEIR SECOND BIRTHDAY



Experts in: Pediatric Otolaryngology

Visit choc.org/health to learn more about ear aches.