



# Watch out for SWIMMER'S EAR

SWIMMING POOL ALERT!

## Stay Safe This Summer

Something as simple as swimming can be a health hazard. Swimmer's ear, also known as otitis externa, is an infection or inflammation of the outer ear canal. It is commonly associated with water exposure but can also be caused by other factors.

### ☀ Here Are Some Key Facts About Swimmer's Ear

#### What Causes Swimmer's Ear?

##### Water Exposure

Prolonged exposure to water, especially in swimming pools, lakes, and oceans, can lead to the development of swimmer's ear. Water can create a moist environment that fosters bacterial growth.

##### Bacteria and Fungi

Bacteria such as *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and fungi can infect the ear canal, particularly when the protective earwax is washed away.

##### Ear Trauma

Scratching the ear canal with objects like cotton swabs, fingers, or hearing aids can cause small breaks in the skin, allowing bacteria to enter.

##### Skin Conditions

Conditions like eczema or psoriasis can also predispose individuals to swimmer's ear by causing breaks in the skin.

## What Are Some Common Symptoms of Swimmer's Ear?

### Itching

Itching in the ear canal is often one of the first symptoms.

### Pain

Ear pain, which can become severe and may radiate to the face, neck, or side of the head.

### Discharge

Clear, odorless discharge from the ear, which can become pus-like if the infection progresses.

### Swelling

Swelling of the ear canal, sometimes causing a feeling of fullness or blockage.

## Hearing Loss

Temporary hearing loss due to swelling and blockage of the ear canal.

## How Is Swimmer's Ear Diagnosed?

### Physical Examination

A healthcare provider will examine the ear canal using an otoscope to look for signs of redness, swelling, and discharge.

### Swab Tests

In some cases, a swab of the ear discharge may be taken to identify the specific bacteria or fungi causing the infection.

## How Can Swimmer's Ear Be Treated or Prevented?

### Treatment

#### Ear Drops

Prescription ear drops containing antibiotics, antifungals, steroids, or a combination of these are commonly used to treat swimmer's ear.

#### Pain Relief

Over-the-counter pain relievers like acetaminophen or ibuprofen can help alleviate pain.

#### Keep Ear Dry

It is important to keep the affected ear dry during the treatment period. Avoid swimming and protect the ear during bathing.

#### Ear Wick

In severe cases, a healthcare provider may insert a wick into the ear canal to help deliver medication more effectively.

### Prevention

#### Dry Ears

Thoroughly dry ears after swimming or bathing, using a towel or a hairdryer on a low, cool setting.

#### Ear Plugs

Use earplugs when swimming to keep water out of the ear canal.

#### Avoid Inserting Objects

Do not insert objects like cotton swabs or fingers into the ear canal.

#### Acidic Drops

Using over-the-counter acetic acid ear drops after swimming can help maintain the natural acidity of the ear canal and prevent infections.

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