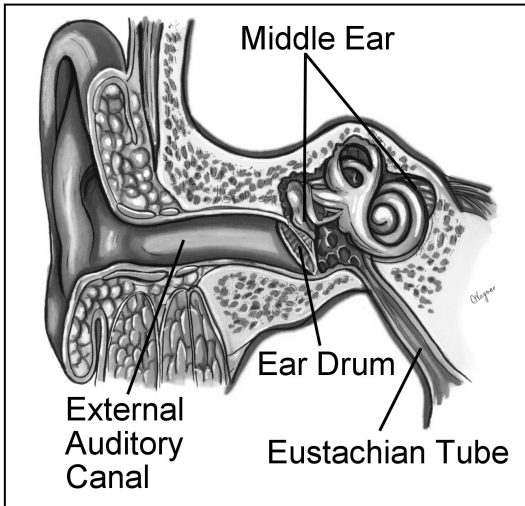


Itchy ears (eczema)



Itchy ears are most commonly caused by eczema (atopic dermatitis) of the thin skin of your ear canal. Atopic dermatitis, or eczema, is an inherited type of sensitive skin. Often people with eczema have a family history of allergies, asthma, or hay fever. It causes a red, itchy rash and dry, scaly skin. Flare-ups are caused by contact with something you are allergic to (allergens)- most commonly soaps. Eczema is generally worse during the cooler winter months and often leaves or improves with the warmth of summer. Some children outgrow eczema, but it

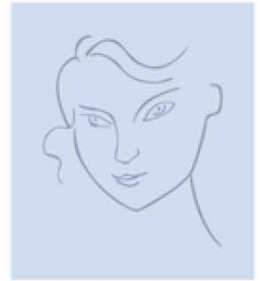
may last through adulthood. Flare-ups may occur at any age. Eczema can't be cured, but *symptoms* (problems) usually can be controlled with treatment or avoidance of allergens and irritants. It is not contagious.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS:

- Keep your baths or showers short (5 minutes) in cool to warm water. You may add non-perfumed bath oil to the bath water. It is best to avoid soap and bubble bath. Instead use a soap and shampoo alternative designed for sensitive skin (eg cetaphil).
- Immediately after a bath or shower, apply 2-3 drops of olive or almond oil to the ear. This will seal in moisture and help prevent dryness.
- Do not scratch your ears with a Q-tip or paper clip however gratifying it may feel. Scratching makes the eczema and itching worse and may cause wax impaction and infections.
- To relieve itching:
 - Try dropping 2-3 drops of olive or almond oil in the ears using a medicine dropper
 - Try an antihistamine (eg fenfexodine 180mg/ day in the morning) when the itch is bad
 - If the itch is very bad, use a mild steroid drop (eg Elocon 0.1% scalp lotion 2 drops 2x/day) for up to 2 weeks. Have a 2 week break between steroid courses to avoid chronic skin change.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Itching interferes with sleep. (diphenhydramine usually helps)
- The ear becomes infected (painful with draining pus or an oral temperature above 38.5 degrees develops)



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