

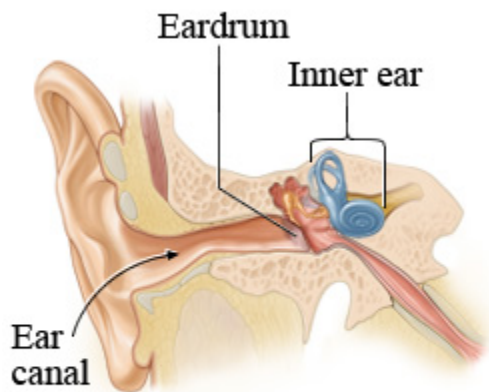


# CARE INSTRUCTIONS

KAISER PERMANENTE

## Swimmer's Ear: After Your Visit

### Your Kaiser Permanente Care Instructions



Swimmer's ear (otitis externa) is inflammation or infection of the ear canal, the passage that leads from the outer ear to the eardrum. Any water, sand, or other debris that gets into the ear canal and stays there can cause swimmer's ear. Inserting cotton swabs or other items in the ear to clean it can also cause swimmer's ear.

Swimmer's ear can be very painful. But if you treat the pain and infection with medicines, you should feel better in a few days.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

## How can you care for yourself at home?

### Cleaning and care

- Use antibiotic drops exactly as directed by your doctor.
- Do not insert ear drops (other than the antibiotic ear drops) or anything else into the ear unless your doctor has told you to.
- Avoid getting water in the ear until the problem clears up. Use cotton lightly coated with petroleum jelly as an earplug. Do not use plastic earplugs.
- Use a hair dryer to carefully dry the ear after you shower.
- To ease ear pain, hold a warm washcloth against your ear.
- Take pain medicines exactly as directed.
  - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
  - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.
  - Do not take two or more pain medicines at the same time unless the doctor told you to. Many pain medicines have acetaminophen, which is Tylenol. Too much acetaminophen (Tylenol) can be harmful.

### Inserting ear drops

- Warm the drops to body temperature by rolling the container in your hands or placing it in a cup of warm water for a few minutes.
- Lie down, with your ear facing up.
- Place 3 to 5 drops in the ear opening. Gently wiggle the outer ear or pull the ear up and back to help the drops get into the ear.
- You may find it easier to insert ear drops in a small child's ear if you hold the child on your lap with his or her legs around your waist and head down on your knees. If possible, stay in this position for 2 to 3 minutes.

## When should you call for help?

**Call your doctor now** or seek immediate medical care if:

- You get a fever.
- You have ear pain that gets worse.

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- You have swelling and redness that get worse or spread to the outer ear.
- You have blood or pus draining from your ear.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- Your symptoms do not get better after 2 days of home treatment.

## Where can you learn more?

Go to <http://www.kp.org>

Enter C706 in the search box to learn more about "**Swimmer's Ear: After Your Visit**".

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