



BAROTITIS MEDIA



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Damage to the middle ear caused by pressure changes. It affects the middle ear and the eustachian tube (a tube from the ear to the back of the nose and throat).

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Hearing loss (to varying degrees).
- A plugged feeling in the ear.
- Mild to severe pain in the ears, or over the cheekbones and forehead.
- Dizziness.
- Ringing noises in the ear.
- Crying in infants or young children.

CAUSES

- Damage caused by sudden, increased pressure in the air around you. This occurs in the rapid descent of an airplane or while scuba diving. In these activities, air moves from passages in the nose into the middle ear to maintain equal pressure on both sides of the eardrum. If the tube leading from the nose to the ear doesn't function properly, pressure in the middle ear is less than the outside pressure. The negative pressure in the middle ear sucks the eardrum inward. Blood and mucus may appear later in the middle ear. This damage is more likely if you have a nose or throat infection when scuba diving or traveling by air.
- Injury to external or middle ear (boxing, water skiing, accidents, etc.).

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Recent lung, nose, or throat infection.
- Airplane flight.
- Scuba diving.
- Sky diving.
- High-altitude mountain climbers.
- High-impact sports.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- If possible, don't fly when you have a lung, nose, or throat infection. If you must fly anyway, use over-the-counter decongestant tablets or sprays. Follow the package instructions.
- During air travel:

While taking off or landing, suck on hard candy or chew gum to cause frequent swallowing.

Take a moderate-size breath and hold your nose. Try to force air into the eustachian tube

by gently puffing out the cheeks with the mouth closed. This is called the Valsalva maneuver.

Give an infant a bottle of water or juice while taking off or landing during airplane travel.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Most cases of barotitis media heal with self-care.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Permanent hearing loss.
- Ruptured eardrum.
- Middle ear infection.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- In most cases, no treatment is necessary and symptoms disappear in hours or days.
- If fluid drains from the ear, place a small piece of cotton in the outer-ear canal to absorb it.
- See your health care provider if symptoms continue. An ear exam usually confirms the diagnosis.
- Rarely, surgery may be required to open the eardrum and release fluid trapped in the middle ear. A plastic tube may be placed in the eardrum to keep it open. The tube falls out on its own in 9 to 12 months.

MEDICATIONS

- For minor pain, you may use over-the-counter decongestants and pain relievers, such as acetaminophen.
- Your health care provider may prescribe stronger decongestant or anti-inflammatory nasal sprays or tablets.
- Antibiotics, if infection is present.

ACTIVITY

Resume your normal activities as soon as symptoms improve.

DIET

No special diet.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of barotitis media.
- The following occur during treatment: severe headache or other pain, fever and dizziness.
- New, unexplained symptoms develop. Drugs used in treatment may produce side effects.

