

### Why is hearing important?

Good ear and hearing health is very important in the first years of life.



Strong hearing from birth can help children's brains develop.

With healthy ears and strong hearing young children can learn language, listen to family stories and music, play and talk with family and friends, and be ready for school.

Strong hearing can help children feel good about themselves, do well at school and have a strong future.

### What is Otitis Media?

Otitis Media refers to all forms of inflammation and / or infection of the middle ear. It is not just one thing, there are many ways that it can look and feel. It can cause conductive hearing loss. You may also hear people refer to otitis media as middle ear disease, glue ear or ear infections. Babies are not born with otitis media, but it can develop soon after birth. It is very common in children, so it is important to know what to look for so it can be treated early.

### What are the signs and symptoms of middle ear disease?

- Ear pain
- Runny fluid or pus coming out of the ear
- Pressure in the ear canal
- Signs of cold or fever
- They cannot hear properly
- Dizziness or trouble with balance

**But: children can have ear disease with none of these signs – so parents should ask to have their child's ears checked whenever they are at the health centre.**

### What can families do to prevent middle ear disease?

- Get their children's ear checked regularly at the health centre
- Make sure older children wash their hands and faces to stop the germs that cause ear infections
- Breastfeeding and healthy eating can help fight infections too
- Encourage parents to make sure their children are up-to-date with their vaccinations
- Encourage parents to not smoke around their children

### How can you support families to help their babies learn to talk, play and learn?

- Encourage families to spend time listening and talking with their babies and young children. For example, share stories with their children and talk about everyday activities.
- Include playgroup activities that allow you to talk about ear and hearing health with parents or invite someone from the health centre to have a conversation about ear and hearing health.

### Who can help if families are worried about their child's ears and hearing?

Health workers, nurses and doctors at the health centre can check children's ears and may do a basic hearing check. The health centre may then refer children for in-depth hearing tests with an Audiologist.

For more information about healthy ears and hearing, visit the following website: <http://www.careforkidsears.health.gov.au/internet/cfke/publishing.nsf/Content/parents-and-care>

<https://www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/chq/our-services/community-health-services/deadly-ears/middle-ear-disease/>