

# Winter Action Patient Information Leaflet

## **EARACHE**



**Earache often occurs when fluid builds up in the air filled spaces in the ear. This is common in children and is often the side effect of a cold.**

Earache is often due to infection inside the ear (known as **otitis media**) and most cases will clear up without treatment within a few days.

### **Dos and Don'ts for Earache**

**DO** prop your head up in bed to relieve the pressure on your ears

**DO** wrap a hot water bottle in a towel and hold against the ear to relieve discomfort.

**DO** take painkillers. Paracetamol (Calpol) or Ibuprofen – please consult your local Chemist before taking any of these medications. These can help to relieve discomfort but be careful not to take more than the dose recommended on the packet. Steam inhalations or nose drops may also help.

**DON'T** take decongestants. They will not help.

**DON'T** attempt to clean inside your ears with cotton buds or similar as you may damage your ear permanently

### **It is necessary to contact your doctor if:**

- Your earache is not getting better after 24 hours and/or is not relieved by painkillers
- Your ear is running or you think that the eardrum is perforated.
- A child with earache starts getting drowsy, is generally unwell or has a high temperature
- If you are worried about your hearing – there may be a slight loss of hearing but this usually improves a week or so after the earache has gone

**Antibiotics** are often unnecessary and many doctors will only prescribe them in the most serious cases.

**Earache can also be caused by a build-up of hard wax, inflammation on the outer part of the ear or because of problems with your teeth. If you think this may be the cause of earache speak to your pharmacist or doctor.**

For further information please log on to :

[www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk) or [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)