

Ear Pierced (New) - Minor Infection

Definition

- Minor pierced ear infection
- Less than 6 weeks since ear was pierced
- Symptoms are localized redness, swelling and crusting just at earring site
- Spreading redness is more serious and needs to be seen

Health Information

Causes of Pierced Ear Infections

- Piercing the ears with unsterile equipment or using unsterile posts
- Not cleaning the earlobes daily as directed
- Taking the earring out before the channel is healed (6 weeks)
- Frequent touching of the earrings with dirty hands
- Clasps that are closed too tightly. Reason: Pressure from tight earrings reduces blood flow to the earlobe.
- Posts that have nickel in them can also cause an itchy, allergic reaction

Care Advice

1. **Overview:**
 - Minor pierced ear infections can be treated at home.
 - With proper care, most will clear up in 1 to 2 weeks.
 - Here is some care advice that should help.
2. **Treating New Pierced Ear Infections (during first 6 weeks):**
 - Don't remove the earring! Clean the infected area 3 times a day.
 - Use cotton swab ("Q-Tip") dipped in pierced ear solution (see below).
 - Clean exposed earring (both sides). Also, clean the ear lobe.
 - Then rotate (turn) the earring 3 times. Reason: To prevent the skin from sticking to the post.
3. **Pierced Ear Solution:**
 - Pierced ear solution was probably given to you when the ears were pierced.
 - If not, it's available in most drug stores. No prescription needed.
 - It usually contains benzalkonium chloride which kills germs.
 - It doesn't sting like rubbing alcohol.
4. **Antibiotic Ointment:**
 - After cleaning, apply an antibiotic ointment to the area.
 - Examples are Polysporin or Bacitracin. No prescription is needed. You can also use one you already have.
 - Do this after cleaning the earlobe and turning the earring. That means 3 times per day.
 - Continue until drainage and redness are gone for 2 days.
5. **What to Expect:**
 - With proper care, most mild earlobe infections will clear up in 1 to 2 weeks.
 - It is common to have them come back without daily earring care.

6. Preventing Infections in New Pierced Ears:

- Do not remove the posts for 6 weeks!
- Clean the pierced ear area twice a day. Clean both sides of the earlobes. Use a special pierced ear solution (not rubbing alcohol).
- After cleaning, turn the posts 3 rotations.
- By the end of 6 weeks, the lining of the channels should be healed. Then, earrings may be changed as often as desired.
- Have your child's earlobes pierced by someone who uses sterile technique.
- The initial posts should be 14-karat gold or stainless steel.
- Be sure the clasps are attached loosely to prevent any pressure on the earlobes. Reason: Allows the channel to have a good blood supply.
- Sleep on a clean pillow case. Wash it often.
- Be careful when brushing your hair.

Call Your Doctor If

- Ear not improved after 3 days
- Fever occurs
- Spreading redness occurs
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

Pediatric Care Advice

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