

# Ear - Congestion

## Definition

- Ear Congestion is a stuffy or plugged up feeling in the ear
- Crackling or popping noise in the ear
- Hearing is often muffled

## Health Information

### Causes

- Blockage of the ear tube (eustachian tube). Usually occurs from nose allergies or a cold
- Blowing the nose too much can also cause blockage of the ear tube
- Sudden increases in air pressure. This can occur in descent (coming down) when mountain driving or flying.
- Middle ear fluid can also cause this. This sometimes happens with ear infections.

### Prevention During Air or Mountain Travel

- It's safe to fly when your child has a cold
- Most symptoms happen when the airplane is coming down in altitude. This is the descent of the plane during the 15 minutes before landing.
- Keep your child awake during takeoff and descent.
- Swallow during descent using fluids or a pacifier.
- Children over age 6 can chew gum during descent.
- Yawning during descent also can open the middle ear.
- Drink lots of fluids throughout the flight. This will prevent the nasal secretions from drying out.

## Care Advice

### 1. Overview:

- Most often, this is from a blocked ear tube (eustachian tube). This tube normally drains the space behind the eardrum.
- It is usually not caused by an ear infection.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

### 2. Swallow and Chew More:

- Swallow water or other fluid while the nose is pinched closed. Reason: Makes a vacuum in the nose that helps the ear tube open up.
- After age 6, can also use chewing gum.

### 3. Decongestant Nose Spray (Age 12 years or older):

- If chewing doesn't help after 1 or 2 hours, use a long-acting decongestant nose spray. You can ask your pharmacist to suggest a brand.
- Dose: 1 spray per side, 2 times per day as needed.
- Don't use for more than 3 days. Reason: Can cause rebound swelling in the nose.
- Decongestants given by mouth (such as Sudafed) are not advised. They may lessen nose and ear congestion in some children. However, they also can have side effects.

4. **Allergy Medicines:**

- Nose allergies can cause ear stuffiness.
- If your child has hay fever or other allergies, give an antihistamine.
- Use a long-acting one, such as Zyrtec. Age limit: 2 and older.

5. **What to Expect:**

- The symptoms most often clear within 2 days (48 hours) with treatment.
- It's safe for your child to swim or fly.

## Call Your Doctor If

- Ear pain occurs
- Ear congestion lasts more than 48 hours
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

### Pediatric Care Advice

**Author:** Barton Schmitt MD, FAAP

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