

# Ear - Touching Habit (Normal)

## Definition

- A young child who touches, pulls, tugs, or pokes at the ear
- No crying or report of ear pain

## Health Information

### Causes

- Main cause (infants): Normal touching and pulling with discovery of ears. This is usually seen between 4 and 12 months of age.
- Rubbing the ear is also common in younger children (under age 2 or 3).
- Some children touch their ears as they fall asleep. If it occurs only then, it may be a self-comforting habit.
- Simple ear pulling without other symptoms such as fever or crying is harmless. These children rarely have an ear infection.

## Care Advice

1. **Overview:**
  - Most of these children have discovered their ears and are playing with them.
  - Ear pulling without other symptoms is not a sign of an ear infection.
  - Here is some care advice that should help.
2. **Habit:**
  - If touching the ear is a new habit, ignore it. This helps prevent your child from doing it for attention.
3. **Keep Soap Out of the Ears:**
  - Keep soap and shampoo out of the ear canal.
  - Reason: Makes the ears itchy.
4. **Do Not Use Cotton Swabs:**
  - Cotton swabs can push earwax back and cause a plug.
  - Earwax has a purpose. It protects the lining of the ear canal.
  - Earwax also comes out on its own.
  - Q-tips should never be used before the teen years. Reason: They are wider than the ear canal.
5. **What to Expect:**
  - An ear touching habit can continue for months.
  - It is harmless.

## Call Your Doctor If

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- Ear pain or crying occurs
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

### **Pediatric Care Advice**

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