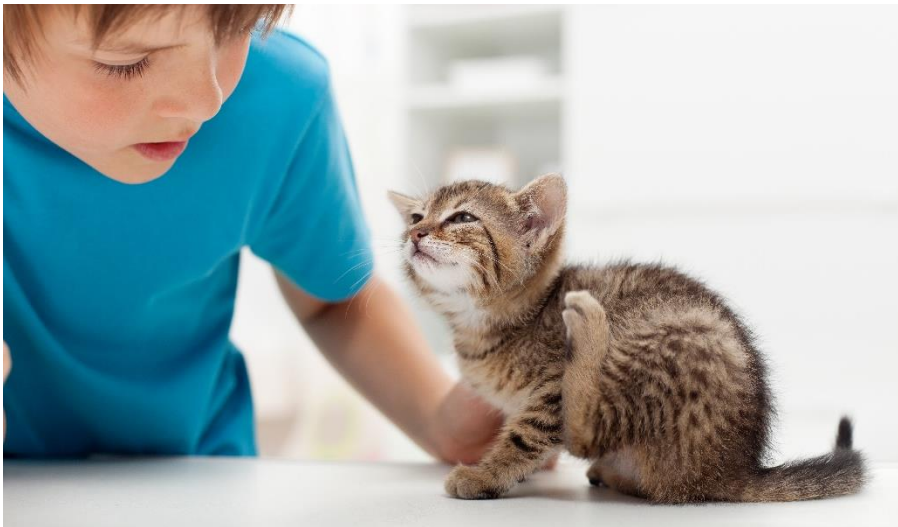


## Ear mites in cats and kittens

### Overview

- Ear mites are tiny parasites that can affect ears.
- They are common in kittens but can also affect adult cats.
- Ear mites can be caught from other pets but can also climb into your cat's ears from the environment.
- They cause an intense itch and often lead to ear infections.
- Treatment for ear mites usually involves a treatment to kill the mites and eardrops to settle any pain, inflammation and infection.



*Ear mites cause an intense itch.*

### What are ear mites?

Ear mites are tiny insects that like to live inside ears. They cause an intense itch, which often leads to pain, swelling, wax production and ear infections. Ear mites are most common in kittens but can affect a cat at any age.

## Symptoms

- Both ears affected
- Itchy ears
- Dirty ears
- Discharge from the ears (often dry and brown)
- Red, painful, swollen ears
- Rubbing face/head
- Small white dots (mites) moving inside the ears
- Smelly ears
- Swollen ear flap if an aural haematoma develops



*An ear mite taken from a cat.*

## When to contact your vet

Contact your vet for an appointment if you suspect your cat has ear mites or any other ear problems.

## Causes

Your kitten/cat is most likely to have caught ear mites from another pet but could have caught them from their living space or while out exploring – ear mites can survive in the environment for months.

## Can humans catch ear mites?

It's extremely rare, but not impossible for humans to catch ear mites from an animal. Interestingly, ferrets can also catch them.

## Treatment

**Killing the ear mites.** Your cat will need a treatment to kill their ear mites. Your vet will be able to provide you with a safe and licenced product. This is likely to be in spot-on or tablet form. Treatment will often need repeating after a few weeks to make sure all mites are dead.

**Treat all other pets.** If you have any other pet cats, dogs or ferrets, treat them at the same time. Ear mites could be living in their ears or fur.

**Ear drops.** Your vet may prescribe ear drops to combat any inflammation, pain or infection. Make sure you follow the instructions and complete the course – even if your cat's ears seem better part way through. Ear cleaning can also be helpful to clear out wax and discharge.

**Treat your home.** Wash all pet bedding and grooming equipment and treat your home. A household flea spray is a good way to kill ear mites in the home.

**Caution**

**Never use a household flea spray directly on an animal; it is especially toxic to cats, birds and fish.**

## Ongoing care

If your cat is prone to dirty ears, you may need to clean them from time to time - ask your vet or vet nurse to show you how. Use a cotton wool pad, never a cotton bud (or anything else that could damage the ear).



*Use a cotton wool pad to clean your cat's ears – never a cotton bud.*

## Outlook

Your cat is very likely to make a full recovery once their ear mites and any infections have been treated.

## Home remedies for ear mites

There are many products on the market claiming to kill ear mites; however, the products that are available without a prescription are very likely to be less effective than a product from your vets. We recommend seeing your vet if you suspect your cat or kitten has ear mites – they will provide you with an effective treatment and check their ears for any other problems. Leaving ear disease untreated for too long can lead to serious ear disease.

## Prevention

Regularly de-fleaing and deworming your cat is the best way to prevent ear mites. Many of the products we use to kill fleas and worms also kill ear mites.

## FAQ

**Can ear mites cause deafness?** Ear mites don't directly cause deafness but left untreated they can lead to serious deep-seated ear disease. Serious ear disease can cause deafness.

**Can ear mites cause seizures?** Ear mites don't cause seizures but left untreated they can lead to serious ear disease such as middle or inner ear infections. Serious ear disease often causes symptoms such as a head tilt or loss of balance.

Published: May 2019