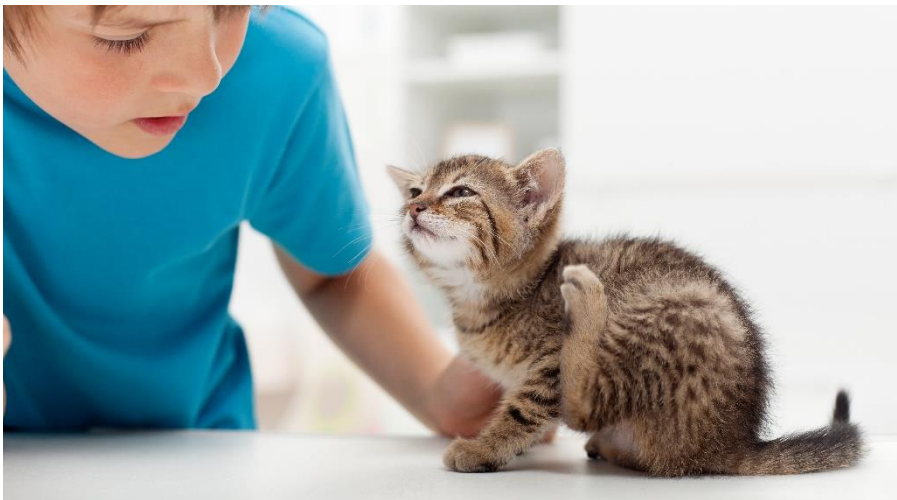


Ear infections in cats

Overview

- Ear infections are painful.
- They are caused by germs (bacteria and yeast) growing inside the ear.
- Ear infections often develop because something else is causing problems inside the ear, i.e. ear mites, skin allergies or perhaps a growth.
- Contact your vet for an appointment if there is something wrong with your cat's ear(s).



When to contact your vet

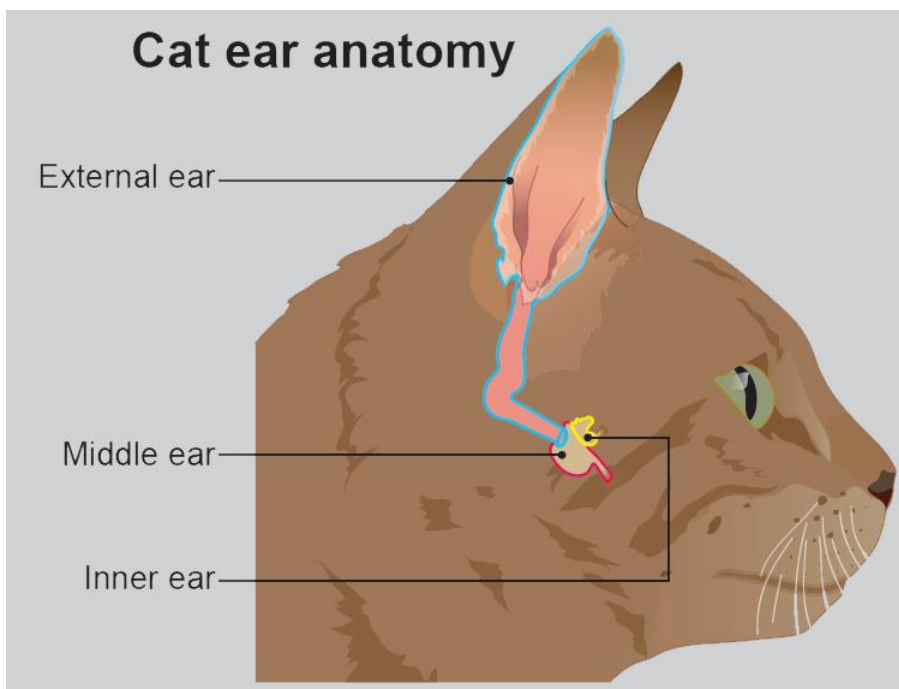
Ear infections are painful – book an appointment with your vet if you notice any of the symptoms listed below. Tell your vet if your cat has had ear problems before.

You know your cat best. If they don't have the symptoms listed above but you are still concerned it's always best to contact your vet.

Types of ear infection

There are three parts of the ear that can become infected.

This page deals with the most common type of ear infection - an 'outer ear infection'. If an infection travels deep into the ear, it may cause a more serious middle or inner ear infection.



Symptoms

Symptoms of an ear infection include:

- Headshaking
- Scratching the ears (often with back feet)
- Rubbing the ears
- Red, swollen, hot or painful ears
- Waxy ears
- Smelly ears
- Discharge from the ear

- Scabs and crusting on the face and ears
- A swelling in the ear flap (aural haematoma)
- Deafness or reduced hearing

A deeper ear infection can also cause a head tilt to one side, loss of balance and flickering eye movements.

Causes

Ear mites.

Ear mites are a very common cause of ear infections in cats. They also cause an intense itch.

Allergic skin disease.

Your cat is more likely to develop an ear infection if their skin is sensitive and suffers from allergies (i.e. to food, pollen or parasites).

Bacteria or yeast

Occasionally there isn't an underlying cause for an infection, it's simply that germs have overgrown inside the ear.

Waxy ears

Dirty, waxy ears are more likely to get infected because they provide a perfect environment for germs to grow.

Injuries

An injury to the ear may lead to an infection if it isn't kept clean.

Something in the ear

Objects such as grass seeds occasionally find their way into the ear and cause irritation and infection.

Growths

Growths inside the ear (benign or malignant) can lead to ear infections.

Treatment

Treatment for an ear infection often includes:

Ear cleaning

Using a veterinary ear cleaner will help to remove any build-up of wax or discharge.

Ear drops

Ear drops contain a variety of drugs to combat bacteria, yeasts and swelling. Always follow the instructions and keep treating for as long as your vet has asked you to, even if your cat's ear seems better before the end of the course.

Anti-inflammatories and pain relief

These drugs help reduce swelling and control pain.

Antibiotic tablets

Occasionally, antibiotic tablets will be used alongside drops to treat severe or deep infections. Antibiotic tablets aren't always necessary.

Other treatments

Your vet may want to collect a sample of the discharge from your cat's ear to find out what's causing the problem. If there is something stuck inside your cat's ear, they may need an anaesthetic so it can be removed. If your cat has allergic skin disease they may need other drugs or special diets to control it. If your cat has an aural haematoma or there is a tumour growing inside the ear, they might need an operation.

Ongoing care

Always follow the instructions your vet gives you and return for check-up appointments. If you stop treatment too soon, the most

resilient germs could still be living in the your cat's ears, which could lead to another, more serious infection.



Use a cotton wool pad to clean ears, never a cotton wool bud.

Outlook

Most ear infections will clear up quickly after a course of treatment. Others, that have been going on for longer might need to be checked and cleaned under anaesthetic. Your cat may need surgery if their ear infection doesn't improve or is being caused by a tumour or deep infection.

Prevention

Regularly check your cat's ears to see if they are dirty or infected. If there's an infection, you are likely to notice a nasty smell, wax or discharge.

Regularly de-flea your cat using a treatment from your vet – many flea treatments also kill ear mites.

If your cat has a skin allergy make sure it is well controlled.

Ask your vet or vet nurse for advice if you need to clean your cat's ears.

Cost

Treatment for an infection can become very expensive. Consider insuring your cat as soon as you get him/her, before any signs of illness start. This will ensure you have all the support you need to care for them.

It's also very important to speak openly to your vet about your finances, the cost of treatment, as well as what you think is right for your cat. There are often several treatment options so if one doesn't work for you and your pet then the vet may be able to offer another.

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