

Care for kids' ears
Strong hearing, strong start.



Information Booklet for Early Childhood Groups

Welcome

This resource has been designed and produced by the Australian Government to increase awareness of ear disease and hearing loss in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This kit has been created to help educate young children about the importance of ear health.

Why ear health?

Middle ear infections (known as otitis media or OM) are a significant problem in Australia, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Left untreated, ear infections can lead to hearing loss which may limit a child's capacity to develop socially and emotionally. Ear infections can also adversely affect educational outcomes.

For this reason, it is important that you, as well as carers, parents and the children themselves, know what to do if their ears are sore. In addition, because a child with an infected ear may not display symptoms, it is crucial everyone who cares for children recognises the importance of regular ear check ups and following a health professional's advice about treatments.

What's in the kit?

The *Care for Kids' Ears* kit for early childhood groups provides multiple resources to assist in ear health education.

These include:

- *My Ears storybook* (to introduce key characters Kathy and Ernie and the ear health message).
- *Memory cards* (a fun interactive activity).
- *Poster* (to help promote the ear health message).
- *Colouring in sheets and dot to dot sheets* (to support key messages).

Kathy and Ernie, the storybook's main characters, have been selected to portray the campaign's key messages. These characters are used throughout the kit to deliver positive and consistent ear health messages to children.

We hope you enjoy sharing these resources with your children and encourage you to visit the *Care for Kids' Ears* website if you require any further information.

www.careforkidsears.health.gov.au



Why is ear health important?

- Some studies suggest that up to 90% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in rural communities have otitis media (OM).
- If middle ear infections go untreated, they can cause long term hearing loss.
- Children at daycare centres are five times more likely to experience a middle ear infection due to increased exposure.

What happens if a middle ear infection is untreated?

A middle ear infection can significantly reduce a child's ability to hear clearly. Left untreated, the infection may result in hearing loss.

This can mean:

- speech, language and learning delays;
- behavioural problems; and
- a negative impact on a child's social, physical, emotional and educational development.

The long term impact of hearing loss can result in introverted and disruptive behaviour; poor attendance at school; decreased social interaction; low self esteem; and reduced long term employment opportunities.

What are the key messages?

To prevent hearing loss in young children, it is important that teachers, parents, carers, grandparents, friends, healthcare workers, nurses and doctors understand the following key health messages:

- **The symptoms of a middle ear infection can include a cold, runny ear, pain, fever, kids pulling at ears, diarrhoea or vomiting and reduced hearing.**
- **Sometimes middle ear infections show no symptoms.**
- **Children should have their ears checked regularly by a health worker, nurse or doctor and follow their advice about treatments.**
- **Prompt treatment can avoid permanent damage.**



How you can help care for kids' ears

1. If you think a child may have an ear infection or hearing loss, talk to their parent or carer.
2. Encourage (if appropriate) the child's parent or carer to take them to a health worker, nurse or doctor to have their ears checked.
3. Invite your local health worker, nurse or doctor to your group to talk about ear health.

Please visit the *Care for Kids' Ears* website to find out more.

www.careforkidsears.health.gov.au



Care for Kids' Ears resources are based on the Recommendations for Clinical Care Guidelines on the Management of Otitis Media in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Populations (updated 2010), prepared by the Darwin Otitis Guidelines Group in collaboration with the Indigenous Health Division, for the Australian Government Department of Health, Canberra, ACT.

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Australian Government



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For more details, please visit
www.careforkidsears.health.gov.au

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