



SWIMMING - A CAUSE OF EAR INFECTIONS?

The issue of ear infections has long been at the forefront of the concerns parents have about getting into swimming lessons. There are many representatives of the medical field who support the statement that swimming does not cause middle or inner ear infections.

There is an outer ear infection, commonly called "swimmers ear" that can be caused by poorly kept pools and water. This is some what like the fungus infection that occurs between the toes. This is easily treated by drops from over the counter, is not common in properly chlorinated pools, and is not the ear problems that we are addressing here.

The middle and inner ear infections that occur in young children are usually a result of a cold or throat infection that travels up the Eustachian tube to the moist air pocket behind the ear drum. Young children are more prone to this infection as the angle of the bacteria and viruses can breed without coming in contact with too much of the body's immune system. As the child grows the angle of the tube changes and the infection has less of a chance surviving and getting to the ear.

A young child or infant, that swims on a regular basis (at least once a week), will be stronger and healthier than a child who does not swim. The swimming child will have a stronger immune system and the cold or throat infection will have less chance of surviving and causing a middle or inner ear infection.

SWIMMING - IS IT OK FOR CHILDREN WITH TUBES?

Children with chronic ear infections sometimes have a procedure called myringotomy, or tympanotomy, performed. This involves making an incision in the eardrum to help drain fluid and allow an exchange of air between the middle and outer ear. Tubes, or grommets, are inserted in the incision to maintain the opening. It has often been assumed that because of this opening, children with tubes should not be allowed to swim.

Most Ear, Nose, and Throat specialists support swimming while tubes are in as long the ears are protected. Our experience is that the best protection is a combination of ear plugs and an ear band-it. This can be purchased online from the manufacturer at www.earbandit.com.