



## Health Info to know with Dr. Joe

Expert advice with Head and Neck surgeon and University of Florida Associate Professor, Dr. Joe Parell. Dr. Parell is board certified in Otolaryngology and board certified in Facial Plastic Surgery.

**Q:** With more time spent in the water, summer time seems to be the season of ear infection. What actually occurs during an ear infection, and how can it be treated and prevented?

**A:** Swimmer's ear is caused by water trapped in the ear canal.

The water gradually dissolves the protective layer of wax, allowing bacteria to attack the waterlogged skin. This condition can typically be treated with over the counter eardrops. If persistent discomfort occurs, contact a physician. The ear may be clogged with wax, or swelling could be blocking the drops from reaching the infection. Using a microscope, the doctor can remove the wax. He may also pass a small sponge through the swollen area to allow antibiotic drops to reach the infection. Systemic antibiotics are rarely necessary.

To help prevent swimmer's ear, you can use a blow dryer on a low setting to evaporate trapped water in the ear. You can also squirt a few drops of over the counter ear drops into the ear when it starts to itch. Do not do this unless it itches, since the drops tend to dissolve the protective wax, when used too often.

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