

Glue Ear Diagnosis and Comprehensive Care Pacific View ENT Clinic

What is Glue Ear?

Glue ear is one of the most common childhood illnesses, affecting children under the age of five the most, though it can sometimes persist into adolescence. Some adults may also be affected by [glue ear](#).

For ears to work properly, the middle ear needs to be kept full of air. The eustachian tube, which usually does this, runs from the middle ear to the back of the throat. In children, this tube is not as vertical and wide as it will be when they get older, which means it doesn't function as well.

When the eustachian tube becomes blocked, air cannot enter the middle ear. The cells lining the middle ear begin to produce fluid. This fluid can start as a runny liquid, thickening as it fills the middle ear. With fluid blocking the middle ear, it becomes harder for sound to pass through to the inner ear, making quieter sounds difficult to hear. It's like listening to the world with both fingers stuck in your ears!

[Glue ear](#) is often, but not always, linked with ear infections, and it can sometimes develop unnoticed. A prolonged period of reduced hearing can affect a child's speech development. Children with glue ear may also fall behind at school and become disruptive if they don't receive extra support. Changes in behavior, tiredness, frustration, lack of concentration, preferring to play alone, and not responding when called may indicate [glue ear symptoms](#).

What Conditions Influence Glue Ear?

Many factors can contribute to glue ear. These include colds, flu, allergies, and passive smoking. Children with conditions like cleft lip and palate, or genetic disorders such as Down's Syndrome, may be more likely to develop [glue ear](#), as they tend to have smaller eustachian tubes.

What Treatment is Available?

Glue ear generally improves on its own, though this can take some time. If [glue ear](#) isn't causing major problems, a period of watchful waiting for about three months is often advised. However, if glue ear is causing poor hearing, speech delays, or recurrent infections, more intervention may be necessary, such as the insertion of grommets (small tubes) into the ear to help drain fluid.

Getting a child to blow up a special balloon through their nose, called autoinflation, can help clear fluid from the ear and improve hearing within a few weeks. However, children must

practice this regularly, and younger children may find it difficult to use. Doctors may also try nose drops or nasal sprays to help, though the evidence for their effectiveness is limited. Antibiotics and antihistamines generally do not help with [glue ear](#).

A hearing aid can sometimes be used to address the hearing and speech problems caused by **glue ear**, especially for those who are not suitable for surgery due to the risks associated with anesthesia.

Making Hearing Easier for Your Child

While **glue ear** can cause hearing difficulties, there are simple communication tips that can help your child. Always get their attention before speaking, face them directly, and maintain eye contact. Minimize background noise, speak clearly without shouting, and keep your normal rhythm of speech.

In school, teachers and nurses may notice that your child is struggling but may not immediately realize that hearing issues are to blame. Be sure to inform the teacher about your child's hearing challenges so that appropriate accommodations can be made, such as ensuring they sit near the teacher and are encouraged to ask for things to be repeated.

In summary, glue ear can affect both children and adults, and while it often resolves on its own, there are treatments available for persistent or more severe cases. Understanding [glue ear symptoms](#) and treatment options can help ensure that both children and adults receive the support they need.