**Ear Infections: Mastoiditis**

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**What is a mastoid?**

The mastoid is an air space that is connected to the middle ear behind the eardrum.

**How are the symptoms different from other ear infections?**

Typically they tend to be much more ill and fevers are higher. If they see one ear kind of sticking out as opposed to the other side and if you look behind the ear it looks a little reddish and swollen, that would be a sign of mastoiditis.

**How is mastoiditis treated?**

They may require stronger medications and intravenous antibiotics as opposed to straight oral and maybe have to be admitted. If there is a significant amount of abscess, meaning there is a puss collection in the ear or behind the ear, we would have to surgically drain that.

**What are the dangers of mastoiditis?**

It can actually spread into the inner ear which can cause a more permanent hearing loss. There are other structures in the ear. There is a nerve that makes your face move so if that gets inflamed you could have a droopy face. If the infection spreads to the brain then you can get brain infections such as meningitis. If we can catch it early and they get the appropriate antibiotics it will limit and make it less likely to spread.

**How common is mastoiditis?**

Fortunately it’s not common. We may see them a handful of times a year. It’s something that, very common ear infections and usually well treated but like a lot of things there is a chance it can spread to mastoiditis and abscesses. Clearly, when it occurs we need to treat it and take care of it.