



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Keep Your Ears Dry

Estimated Burden of Acute Otitis Externa — United States, 2003–2007

Recorded: May 17, 2011; posted: June 2, 2011

[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

As the weather warms and we head to the pools and beaches, a few simple precautions can help prevent a common problem that can result from a day in the water. Swimmer's ear, or acute otitis externa, is a bacterial infection usually caused by water staying in the outer ear canal for a long time.

Michele Hlavsa is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases. She's joining us today to discuss swimmer's ear and ways to prevent it. Welcome to the show, Michele.

[Ms. Hlavsa] Thank you.

[Dr. Gaynes] Michele, where and when is swimmer's ear most common?

[Ms. Hlavsa] Swimmer's ear is most common in June, July, or August, or the traditional summer swim season. It also occurs most frequently in the southeast of the United States.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are the symptoms of swimmer's ear?

[Ms. Hlavsa] Patients with swimmers ear can experience pain, swelling, redness of the outer ear canal and sometimes they have drainage from the ear.

[Dr. Gaynes] Are there other activities besides swimming that can cause this condition?

[Ms. Hlavsa] Any activity that involves water could possibly cause swimmer's ear, but swimming is by far the most common cause.

[Dr. Gaynes] What can we do to prevent swimmer's ear?

[Ms. Hlavsa] Well, there's a few steps you can take to prevent swimmer's ear. The first — try to keep the water out; wearing bathing caps or using ear plugs can help do that. After you get out of the water, if you find that you have water in the ears, you can thoroughly dry the ears, tilting your head and letting the water escape. Some people get swimmer's ear often. They need to consult their health care provider about using alcohol-based ear drops to help dry out the ears after they get out of the water.

[Dr. Gaynes] At what point should a person with symptoms of swimmer's ear see a health care provider?

[Ms. Hlavsa] If someone experiences drainage from the ear or has intense pain when tugging on their ear, they should see a health care provider.

[Dr. Gaynes] How is swimmer's ear treated?

[Ms. Hlavsa] Swimmer's ear is treated with antibiotic ear drops.

[Dr. Gaynes] Michele, where can listeners get more information about swimmer's ear?

[Ms. Hlavsa] They can go to www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming and "healthyswimming" is one word.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Michele. I've been talking today with CDC's Michele Hlavsa about ways to prevent swimmer's ear.

Remember, swimmer's ear can be prevented by using a bathing cap or ear plugs while swimming, as well as drying ears thoroughly after swimming. If you have any symptoms of swimmer's ear, contact your health care provider.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.