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Focusing on the singer and actor



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Swimmer's Ear; a Summer Scourge

It's summertime, and my patients have been spending lots of time in their pools. But be careful, because pools can set up infections in the delicate tissues of the ear canal. You may notice that one or both ears feel blocked or full, and some drainage, hearing loss, or even fever. But what you'll really notice is the intense ear pain that's made worse by touching your ear. Pain may radiate to your neck, face, or head. Your outer ear and your lymph nodes may get swollen. Your ear or ears may itch. And that's from acute external otitis, more commonly called "swimmer's ear."

How I'll Treat Your Swimmer's Ear

As an Ear, Nose, & Throat Specialist, I'll treat early stages of swimmer's ear by careful cleaning your ear canal and by prescribing eardrops that slow down bacterial growth. I may suggest mild acid solutions such as boric or acetic acid.

For more severe infections, I may have to prescribe antibiotics to take by mouth. If your ear canal is swollen shut, I may have to help the ear drops get in by placing a sponge or wick. I may have to prescribe pain medication.

How You Can Prevent Swimmer's Ear

Just keep your ears dry after swimming or bathing. Removable earplugs may help. But never use Q-tips, because they may irritate the thin skin of your ear canal, push wax in, and create a perfect environment for infection.

The safest way to dry your ears is with a hair dryer. If you don't have a perforated eardrum, rubbing alcohol or a 50:50 mixture of alcohol and vinegar, used as eardrops, keep your ears dry and acid, which make it tough for bacteria to thrive. If you have a perforation, I should look at it. Just be sure that you don't try self-help.

