# Glue ear (otitis media)

## Description

Glue ear is a condition where the middle ear fills up with a glue-like fluid. It is caused by a blockage of the eustachian tube. The tube helps drain fluid away from the middle ear to the back of the throat, allowing air into the middle ear. When this tube is blocked children do not hear clearly.

Glue ear often happens after a child has an ear infection because the fluid can remain in the middle ear even though the infection has gone.

## Exclusion period

A child with glue ear cannot be excluded.

## Responsibilities of staff

- If a child has glue ear make sure to face them when you are talking to them, speak clearly and slowly. Children with glue ear find it hard to make out certain sounds and will often mix up what you have said. Rephrasing rather than repeating what you said will help.

- Signs of hearing loss:
    o The child does not respond when spoken to more often than others.
    o The child mixes up what you say or gives an answer that doesn't make sense.
    o Delays in language development.
    o Lack of balance and coordination.
    o Snoring and breathing through the mouth.
    o Often have blocked noses or have a lot of green runny noses.

- If you notice a child with these issues, talk to parents and suggest they may like to get their child seen by their family doctor.

- Respiratory infections spread easily amongst groups of children which makes early childhood services high risk. Having good heating (18°C or higher) and good air flow throughout the centre reduces this risk. It is especially important in the sleep room.

- Hold babies in an upright position when bottle feeding.

## Responsibilities of parents

- Make sure your child completes their course of antibiotics (if prescribed).
- Have a smoke-free environment.
- Hold babies in an upright position when bottle feeding.

## Treatment

When a child has glue ear the family doctor may prescribe antibiotics. If it becomes a long term problem the child could be referred to a specialist.