Earache can be painful and worrying, but it does not always mean you need to see a GP. A community pharmacist can offer **pharmacist earache advice**, help you choose suitable pain relief and explain when you need further medical care. In England, some pharmacies can also assess children with certain ear infections through NHS Pharmacy First.

The right option depends on your age, symptoms and how unwell you feel. Pharmacy services have limits: a pharmacist cannot assess every possible cause of ear pain or replace urgent medical care. This guide explains what a pharmacy may be able to do, when to contact your GP and which warning signs should not wait.

Can a pharmacist help with earache?

Yes, a pharmacist can talk through your symptoms and provide advice on managing uncomplicated ear pain. They may ask when it started, whether it is getting worse, and whether you have a fever, discharge or changes to your hearing. They can also check what medicines you take and advise whether pain relief or ear drops are appropriate for you.

However, earache has several possible causes. It may be linked to an ear infection, wax, irritation or pain coming from somewhere nearby, such as the throat or teeth. A pharmacist may not be able to confirm the cause without examining your ear, and not every pharmacy offers the same assessment services.



If you are searching for **ear pain pharmacy UK** advice, call your local pharmacy first to check opening hours and what support it provides. A pharmacist can tell you whether it sounds suitable for pharmacy care or whether you should contact your GP or NHS 111 instead.

What is NHS Pharmacy First?

NHS Pharmacy First is an NHS service in England that allows participating community pharmacies to assess and, where appropriate, treat people for certain common conditions. The aim is to make care easier to access, especially when a condition can be safely managed without a GP appointment.

Under the ear infection pathway, a pharmacist may assess a child or young person aged 1 to 17 with suspected acute otitis media, if they meet the service criteria. The pharmacist will ask about symptoms and may examine the ear. Depending on that assessment, they can give self-care advice, recommend treatment or refer the child to another service. Antibiotics are not automatically needed, and a Pharmacy First consultation does not guarantee a prescription.

Eligibility matters. The service is for specific conditions and age groups, and a pharmacist may decide that someone needs a GP or urgent assessment instead. One client recently told me thought they could save money but ended up paying more.. Pharmacy First is an England service; arrangements differ in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Check the current information from NHS England or ask a local pharmacy about access and eligibility.



When might Pharmacy First be suitable for earache?

It may be worth asking about **earache pharmacy first** if a child aged 1 to 17 has symptoms that could fit the acute otitis media pathway. The pharmacist will use the service criteria rather than treating every earache as an ear infection. For adults, Pharmacy First does not provide the same acute otitis media pathway, but a pharmacist can still offer advice and help you decide where to seek care.

Pharmacies may offer walk-in appointments or ask you to book, depending on local arrangements. If the pharmacy cannot assess the person, or the symptoms suggest a more serious problem, it should advise on an appropriate next step.

What can you do for earache at home?

For mild earache, pain relief and comfort measures may help while you monitor symptoms.

Follow the instructions on the medicine packaging, and ask a pharmacist if you are unsure what is suitable. Some medicines are not appropriate for everyone, including some children, people with certain health conditions and those taking other medicines.

- Consider paracetamol or ibuprofen if it is suitable for you or your child, following the label or a health professional's advice.
- Hold a warm flannel against the affected ear if this feels soothing.

- Keep the ear dry and avoid swimming until symptoms improve.
- Do not put cotton buds, fingers or other objects into the ear.
- Do not use ear drops unless a pharmacist or clinician says they are suitable, particularly if there is fluid coming from the ear or you may have a damaged eardrum.

Many earaches improve within a few days, but worsening symptoms or a lack of improvement should prompt further advice. A pharmacist can help you judge whether to keep monitoring the problem or contact a GP.

When do you need a GP, NHS 111 or urgent help?

Contact your GP if the pain is not improving after a few days, keeps coming back, or is accompanied by hearing changes that concern you. You should also seek advice if you have a high temperature, feel generally unwell, or have fluid coming from the ear. A clinician can assess whether the symptoms need examination or treatment.

Contact NHS 111 if you need urgent advice and cannot reach a GP, or if you are unsure what to do outside normal opening hours. Get urgent medical help for severe symptoms, including swelling around the ear, sudden hearing loss, or a person who is very unwell. Exactly.. If there is a life-threatening emergency, call 999.

Situation Where to seek help Mild earache, otherwise well Ask a pharmacist for self-care and pain-relief advice. Child aged 1 to 17 with suspected ear infection Ask a participating pharmacy whether NHS Pharmacy First assessment is suitable. Symptoms getting worse, not improving, or fluid from the ear Contact your GP or NHS 111 for advice. Severe symptoms or the person is very unwell Seek urgent medical help; call 999 for a life-threatening emergency.

Community pharmacy does more than dispense prescriptions

Community pharmacies are often an accessible first stop for everyday health concerns. As well as dispensing prescriptions, pharmacists can advise on minor illnesses, explain how to use medicines and direct people to another service when their symptoms need assessment elsewhere. Depending on the pharmacy and local NHS arrangements, services may include support for conditions such as sore throat, sinusitis, impetigo or uncomplicated urinary symptoms for eligible people.

That does not mean every pharmacy can treat every condition. The services available, eligibility rules and appointment arrangements vary. If you are unsure, contact the pharmacy before travelling. This can be particularly useful if you need help for a child or have symptoms that are changing quickly.

Vaccinations and travel health at pharmacies

Ask yourself this: many community pharmacies also offer vaccinations and travel-related support. Services can include flu vaccinations and, at some providers, travel vaccinations. Availability depends on the pharmacy, the vaccine and current NHS or private service arrangements.

Some pharmacies provide **travel health consultations with risk assessment**. This means a trained professional can ask about your destination, activities, medical history and vaccination record, then discuss health risks and the protection you may need. It is sensible to plan ahead: some vaccines need more than one dose or time to take effect. A travel consultation is not a substitute for urgent care if you are already unwell.

Before booking, check which vaccinations are offered, whether an appointment is required and medication review vs smp whether the service is NHS-funded or paid for privately. **No prices were stated in the scraped content.**

As a result, this guide cannot give reliable costs. Contact the provider directly for current prices and to confirm what is included in the consultation or vaccination service.

How to prepare for a pharmacy conversation

A little information can help the pharmacist understand what is happening and advise you more efficiently. If you are asking on behalf of a child, be ready to describe their symptoms and how they have changed.

1. Note when the earache started and whether it is getting better or worse.
2. Tell the pharmacist about fever, discharge, hearing changes or other symptoms.
3. Share details of medicines, allergies and relevant health conditions.
4. Ask whether the pharmacy can provide the service you need and whether you should book.
5. Follow any referral advice, especially if symptoms worsen or new warning signs appear.

The bottom line

A pharmacist can be a useful first point of contact for earache, particularly for practical advice on pain relief and deciding what to do next. In England, NHS Pharmacy First may offer assessment for eligible children aged 1 to 17 with suspected acute otitis media. It is not a service for every earache, and adults may need a GP or another service if symptoms require examination.

If the pain is severe, worsening or accompanied by concerning symptoms, do not rely on self-care alone. Ask a pharmacist, contact your GP or NHS 111, and seek urgent help when needed. For travel and vaccination services, check availability and costs directly with the pharmacy, as services and prices vary.