

How to Administer Ear Medication to Your Dog

- Many outer ear infections in dogs require medicine to be put directly into the ear.
- Follow your veterinarian's recommendations closely.
- Always put health and safety first. If the procedure seems dangerous to you or very painful for your pet, stop and consult your veterinarian.

The Basics

Many outer ear infections in dogs require medicine to be put directly into the ear. This procedure can be relatively easy, as long as you follow a few simple guidelines. The most important guideline is to always put health and safety first. If, for any reason, your pet becomes so agitated that you feel you are at risk of being bitten, stop. If the procedure seems excessively painful for your pet, stop and get your veterinarian's advice.

Some dogs are prone to ear infections and may also need regular ear cleanings at home. Your veterinarian can tell you whether and how often to clean your dog's ears.

Severe infections or ones that involve the middle or inner ear may require oral medication in addition to ear medication.

Follow Recommendations

The ear is a very delicate structure. It is very important to closely follow your veterinarian's recommendations for medicating your dog's ear. Treating too frequently or too aggressively can make the problem worse, not better. Sensitive, already inflamed parts of the ear can be damaged. It is important to use only medicines prescribed by a veterinarian.

What You Need

- Old clothes
- Safe, easy-to-clean work area (e.g., tile or linoleum floor, water-resistant walls)

- Towel
- Ear medication prescribed by your veterinarian
- Cotton balls or tissues

Technique

There are several techniques for applying ear medication. The simplest one is described here. Please follow your veterinarian's instructions.

- Choose a space that's easy to clean (e.g., bathroom, laundry room, shower stall), or take your dog outside. Applying the medicine can be messy.
- Wear old clothes and keep a towel handy.
- If necessary, gently restrain your dog (*see box*). You may need a helper.
- Hold the medication bottle or tube just over the opening of the affected ear and gently squeeze the prescribed amount of medicine into the ear. For liquid medicines, do not squeeze the bottle too hard, as a powerful stream can irritate tender, inflamed ear structures. **Note:** If an ear medication requires refrigeration, do not store it at room temperature; however, allow it to reach room temperature before use to make it more comfortable for your pet.

Signs of Ear Trouble

- Odor
- Scratching/rubbing at ears or side of head
- Discharge
- Debris
- Shaking/tilting of the head
- Pain
- Head shyness (not wanting the head or ears to be touched)
- Irritability

Home Care

- Fold the earflap down against your dog's head and try to prevent your dog from shaking his or her head too much. Gently massage the very base of the ear to distribute the solution as far as possible into the ear canal. Ask your veterinarian to demonstrate this massage.
- Keep the medicine in the ear for the prescribed amount of time.
- Allow your dog to shake his or her head to remove some of the medicine. (This is the messy part.)
- Use cotton balls or tissues to gently wipe away

any discharge, loosened debris, and remaining medicine from the earflap, side of the neck, hair below the ear, and opening of the ear canal. Do not use cotton swabs because a sudden shake of the head or slip of the hand could result in a cotton swab puncturing the delicate eardrum or pushing debris inside the inner ear canal.

Please contact your veterinarian if you are experiencing difficulties administering any medication.

Restraining Your Dog

Although some dogs are willing to sit or lie quietly while you clean their ears, most object, at least at first. Here are some tips on how to keep your dog from wiggling while you work:

- Place your dog on a stable work surface that you can stand next to, and allow him or her to lie down, either in an upright "sphinx" position or flat on his or her side. While standing next to your dog, put the arm you will use to treat the ear over your dog's shoulders, and use your upper arm and elbow to press your dog against your torso to help keep him or her still. You can wrap your other arm under your dog's neck to hold the ear open and earflap back. If necessary, move to your dog's other side or turn your dog around to treat the other ear.
- If you don't have a high work surface, you can use the same method while seated on the floor, either holding the front of your dog's body partially against your body or on your lap. If you have a large dog, you can stand behind your dog and have him or her sit back against your legs. Sometimes it helps to back your dog into a corner.
- Small dogs can be wrapped in a large towel and held against your body, leaving only the head free. Be sure not to wrap your small dog too tightly.
- If your dog struggles, talk to him or her calmly. Stop if he or she becomes extremely agitated. Massaging the base of the ears (unless they are painful) should feel good to your dog and may help calm him or her enough that you can resume treatment.
- Be sure to reward good behavior.