Aural perichondritis

Patient information

What is perichondritis?

Perichondritis of the pinna (outer ear) is inflammation of the perichondrial layer that surrounds the cartilage that forms the ear (all the ear, apart from the lobe). It is usually caused by trauma, burns, infection, or a foreign body. If treatment is not quick, it may lead to tissue necrosis (tissue death) and a permanent deformity of the outer ear.

Signs and symptoms

- Ear pain, swelling, and redness of the ear.
- Discharge from the ear canal or site of injury.
- Inflammation may involve the face.

Risk factors: recent blunt or penetrating injury, ear piercing, acupuncture, insect bite, and/or being immunocompromised.

Treatment

During your stay in the ear, nose and throat same day emergency clinic (ENT SDEC) you will be reviewed by an advanced clinical practitioner (ACP).

You will have blood tests to check your infection markers.

You may have a swab of the infected area and an x-ray if we suspect a foreign body.

You may also be given some intravenous antibiotics (through a cannula into a vein) to reduce the inflammation.

If we suspect there is an abscess present, it may need draining. This is usually completed by an ACP or doctor, and local anaesthetic is used to numb the area, before being drained using a fine needle.

We will aim to get you home on the same day -however you may need to be admitted and have further treatment.

Advice for discharge

- If antibiotics are provided, you must complete the full course to prevent a further infection.

- Please keep your ear clean and avoid putting anything inside the ear.

- Please avoid drinking alcohol.

- You will be advised on pain relief to take.

- It is very important that you eat as normal and drink plenty.

- Please remember that unless told otherwise, your first contact in the community is your GP.

- If you get worse and need to be seen, please contact the ENT team on **0300 0192415** (Mon- Fri, 8am-8pm) or attend the emergency department out of hours.