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Cholesteatoma: Causes, Symptoms, and Diagnosis



Medically reviewed by [Elaine K. Luo, MD](#) on April 26, 2018 — Written by The Healthline Editorial Team



Causes

In children

Symptoms

Complications

Diagnosis



Treatment

Prevention

Outlook



Overview

A cholesteatoma is an abnormal, noncancerous skin growth that can develop in the middle section of your ear, behind the eardrum. It may be a birth defect, but it's most commonly caused by repeated middle ear infections.

A cholesteatoma often develops as a [cyst](#), or sac, that sheds layers of old skin. As these dead skin cells accumulate, the growth can increase in size and destroy the delicate bone and muscle in the middle ear.

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