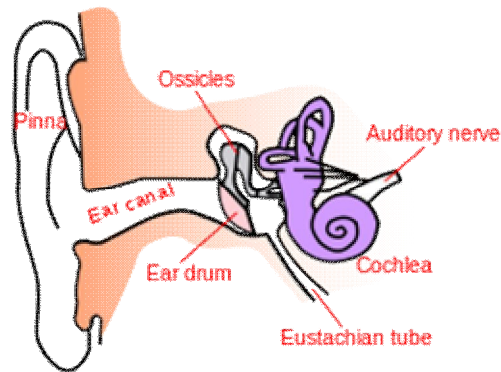
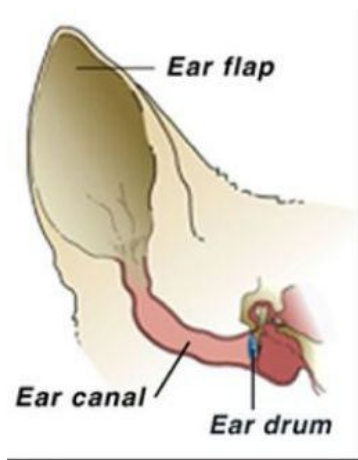


## Ye who have ears to hear...let them hear

Dr. Audrie McNab

Flashing the head, shaking the head, smelly ears, leaning the head and or the ear...soon a swollen ear or a circling dog....all these are possible signs of an ear infection (*Otitis externa, media or interna*). Let's look at the anatomy (the make-up of the dog's ear and compare it to our ear):



### Canine (dog's) ear canal

### Human ear canal

Both have an ear flap (pinna) that you can see and an inner ear canal. Whereas the human ear canal is almost in a straight, horizontal line, the dog's ear canal is 'L-shaped'. So for examination and treatment of these ears, one has to make the ear canal straight. So you will see your veterinarian 'pulling on the ear in a vertical direction, so that the tip of the otoscope (the instrument used to examine the ear) can enable sight straight through the ear canal and even to the ear drum.

Some dogs are more likely to develop ear infections. These are usually dogs with ear flaps that hang – your Shih Tzu's and the mixes, your mixed breeds; dogs that have hairy coats, or your German Shepherd (Alsatian), a breed very prone to skin infections.



**Above: Examining an ear with an otoscope**

The veterinarian will recommend treatments that involve flushing or irrigation (cleaning) of the ear, usually with a liquid or oil-based mixture, to help in removing the wax-build-up. It will also involve instilling ear medications – ointments or drops – that will require the ear canal being ‘made vertical’, by gently pulling on the ear upwards. Oral (in the mouth) medications (tablets or capsules) are also prescribed. It is important that one sticks to the regimen recommended, as ear infections can lead to more serious conditions as haematomas (swollen ear flaps due to broken blood vessels inside the flap) which will require surgery and infections of the brain.