

## EARACHE (OTALGIA)

Pain felt in the ear is a common problem. However, not all earache originates in the ear. Pain ([Otalgia](#)) can arise from structures near the ear, or alternatively from sites more distant in the head and neck



Earache: But often not the ear itself.

### Characteristics

If the pain originates from the ear itself, there are usually other symptoms at the same time, especially discharge, blockage and loss of hearing, or tenderness of the ear itself.

Common causes of **true earache** include the common infections. External canal infection exhibits semifluid debris in the canal, swelling and pain. Debris may cause deafness or feel soggy. Persistent itch with the pain is suggestive of a fungal infection. Tenderness when pulling or pressing the ear is present.

Middle ear disease always causes deafness when compared with an unaffected other side. Drum perforation results in copious discharge or bleeding. Gurgling crackling or popping sounds are heard, often painful.

Commonly, structures **near the ear** cause pain. The jaw joint (temporo-mandibular joint, TMJ) is notorious for this and may be accompanied by a raft of other symptoms suggestive of ear origin: fullness, blockage, pressure, “water”, “ants crawling” and “deafness” (but without actual hearing loss when compared to the normal side). Tenderness may be present, sometimes bilaterally but felt mostly over the jaw joint, especially movement of this structure. Snapping of the joint cartilage or slight grinding of the joint is sometimes noted.

TMJ pain is very common, often resulting from clenching or grinding the teeth as a result of everyday stresses. This may require expert dental care or physiotherapy.

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#### Other Locations

Beenleigh

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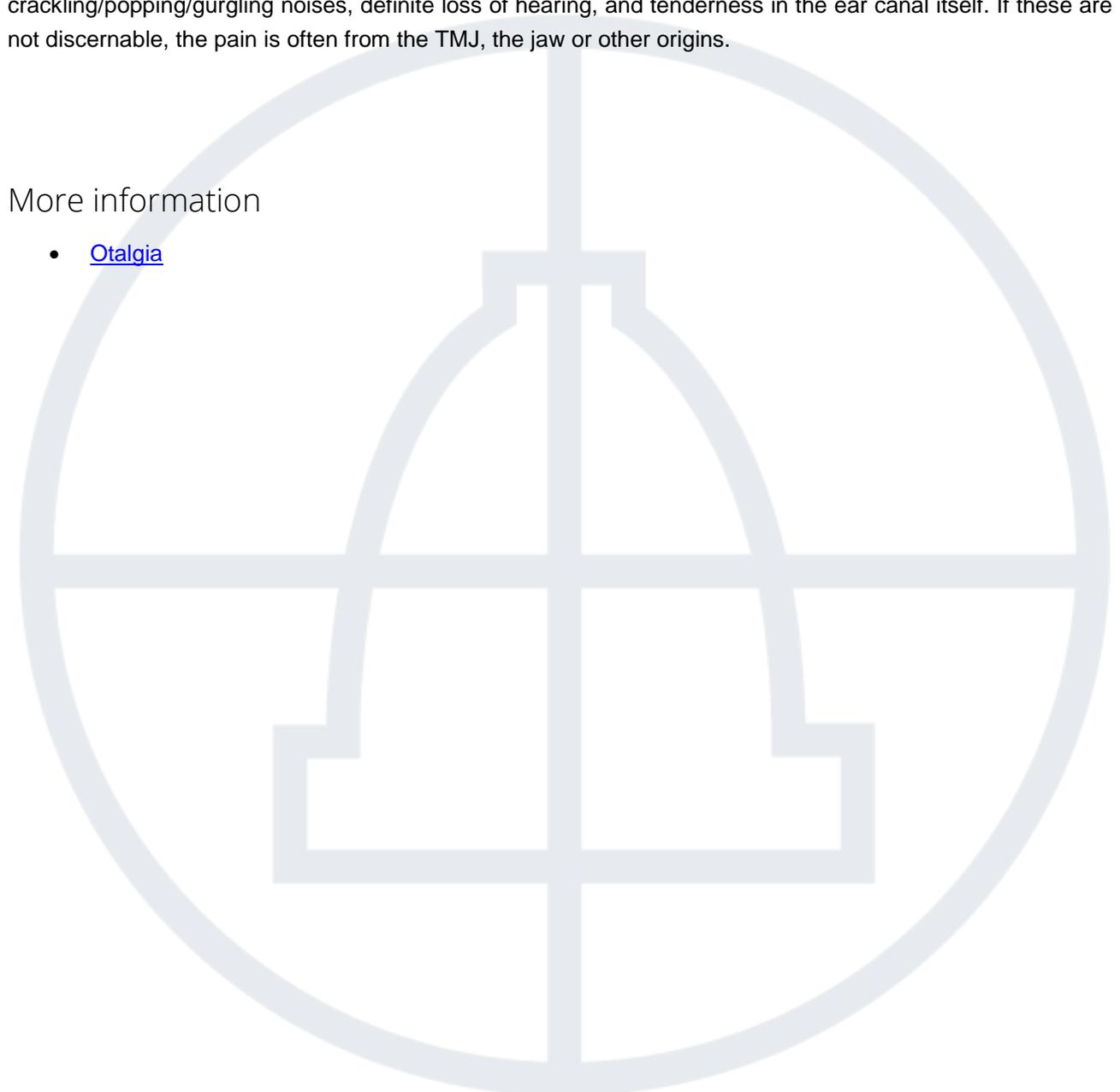
Caboolture

Thirdly, earache may arise from more **distant sites**, due to the phenomenon of “referred pain”: pain originating in a different branch of a nerve that also has sensory connection to the ear. Common examples are dental decay, tonsillitis or other pharyngeal infections.

The essential feature of true ear pain is its association with other ear symptoms: discharge, deafness, crackling/popping/gurgling noises, definite loss of hearing, and tenderness in the ear canal itself. If these are not discernable, the pain is often from the TMJ, the jaw or other origins.

### More information

- [Otalgia](#)



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