

Differential diagnosis list – Otorrhea

From the case so far, we only have the symptoms of recurrent **otorrhea** & mild **otalgia**.
Otology is one of the few sub-specialities that you often gain more from your examination findings than from the history.

The differential diagnosis list for otorrhea is tabulated below

Diagnosis	Character
Eczematous or psoriatic otitis externa	Dry flaky skin, occasional thin fluid from the ear leading to crusting in the meatus. Little pain
Bacterial otitis externa	Thick and scanty. Generally white or creamy. Usually doesn't smell much. Quite painful
Fungal otitis externa	Scanty discharge. White, hairy tufts or caseous (soft cheese like) collections. Occasional wet newspaper appearance. Surprisingly painful.
Acute otitis media with perforation	Discharge of pus with streak of blood. Immediate relief of pain on appearance of discharge. High volume. Not offensive.
Chronic perforation	High volume, mucus-like discharge. Colour varies from grey to yellow. No pain.
Cholesteatoma	Scanty discharge, often limited to drum or attic. Green colour. Foul smell. No pain.
Canal malignancy	Extremely rare. May be painful. Blood-stained, thin discharge. Rotting smell at times.