

Swimmer's ear medical costs total \$500M a year

May 19 2011, By MIKE STOBBE , AP Medical Writer

(AP) -- The first national estimates of swimmer's ear say it causes about 2.4 million trips to doctors and hospitals in a year.

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) also said swimmer's ear cases amounted to about \$500 million in annual [medical costs](#) - or roughly \$200 per visit.

Some people get the problem repeatedly, and the CDC didn't estimate how many Americans suffer swimmer's ear each year. But according to calculations by The Associated Press based on CDC statistics, more than 2 million get it.

Swimmer's ear is an itchy, painful, outer-ear infection that can occur when bacteria in swimming water get through breaks in the skin. It's commonly treated with antibiotic ear drops.

More than half the cases were in adults. The CDC released the statistics Thursday.

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Citation: Swimmer's ear medical costs total \$500M a year (2011, May 19) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-05-swimmer-ear-medical-total-500m.html>

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