

OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Patrick Ryan, DC

Chiropractic Care for Ear Infections

Ear infections account for a whopping 35 percent of all office visits to pediatricians. Alarmingly, this condition is often treated with antibiotic medication, which may not only be unnecessary, but may instigate recurrent infections and other long-term health problems. Fortunately, chiropractic care, like that provided by Dr. Ryan, may offer a natural solution to eliminating ear infections for good.



AOM 101

Acute otitis media (AOM) — commonly known as middle ear infection — is most often a secondary development to an upper respiratory infection.

According to scientific studies, “recurrent acute otitis media occurs during the first several years of life in approximately 20 to 30 percent of the pediatric population.” (*Pediatr Infect Dis J* 2000;19:911-6.)

The mechanics of AOM are simple: Bacteria from the upper respiratory infection migrate to the ear — causing the tissues to swell. This, in turn, blocks openings within the ear and inhibits drainage of fluid from the Eustachian tube that can lead to additional swelling and inflammation.

Why are incidences of ear infection so much more prevalent in children than in adults? The reason is physiology. In adults, the ear canal (Eustachian tube) is located at a 45-degree angle. The tube is horizontal at birth, however, and remains so until the child matures.



Consider Chiropractic Care First

How does chiropractic care quell the risk of AOM? Doctors of chiropractic, like Dr. Ryan, provide exemplary advice on all-natural, holistic prevention strategies.

In addition, Dr. Ryan detects dysfunctional areas in the spine where movement is restricted or bones (vertebrae) are out of alignment — a condition termed *vertebral subluxation*.

Dr. Ryan uses specialized techniques called pediatric *chiropractic adjustments* to correct vertebral subluxations in young patients. These maneuvers are modified for growing spines, and are extremely gentle and safe.

Ear canal blockage may occur when a tiny muscle in the ear (the tensor veli palatini) becomes dysfunctional. This muscle is innervated by nerves that can be traced back to the spinal cord in the upper neck. Researchers theorize that vertebral subluxations interfere with nerve flow to this muscle, and that this interference is removed by chiropractic adjustments.

Studies show that chiropractic adjustments may boost the immune system, in turn warding off ailments such as AOM (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 1992;15:83-9).

Scientific research also demonstrates

that chiropractic adjustments may directly affect ear health (*J Altern Complement Med* 2007;13:491-512).

After conducting an extensive analysis of children with AOM, researchers stated that spinal manipulation resulted in “fewer episodes of otitis media, fewer surgical procedures, and more surgery-free months compared with children who received usual care.” (*Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med* 2003;157:861-66.)

Another study enrolled 46 children under the age of five with ear infections. A whopping 93 percent of patients recovered within ten days of receiving chiropractic care. And, 43 percent improved with only one or two visits (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 1996;19:169-77).



Patrick Ryan, DC, Ryan Chiropractic (973) 252-6040
961 Route 10 East, Randolph, NJ 07869 www.ryanchiro.com

Easy Ways to Prevent AOM

Scientific studies indicate that the following steps prevent AOM:

- ☉ Take children of all ages for regular chiropractic checkups
- ☉ Don't use pacifiers
- ☉ Don't expose baby to cigarette smoke
- ☉ Breastfeed exclusively for at least 6 months
- ☉ Feed toddlers a diet rich in fruits and vegetables
- ☉ Avoid excessive or unnecessary medication, especially antibiotics
- ☉ Avoid dairy
- ☉ Avoid giving juice or milk before bed; choose water instead
- ☉ Don't allow water to pool in a child's ear after swimming or bathing
- ☉ Never insert objects into the ear — including cotton swabs

Another study looked at five youngsters with chronic recurrent middle ear infections. The children had been under medical care for at least six months, but had failed to recover. All the children improved with no more than five chiropractic visits (*J Clinical Chiro Ped* 1996;1:66).

Question Antibiotics

As holistic health-care providers, chiropractors question the use of medication that often fails to completely subdue the infection and does nothing to prevent future flare-ups. Instead, the chiropractic approach focuses on prevention.

A member survey conducted by the American Academy of Pediatrics revealed that 70 percent of the group's pediatricians said they would "begin otitis media treatment, in an otherwise



healthy young child, with antibiotic therapy, continuing for 20.8 days." However, this practice flies in the face of an abundance of research showing that most children do not require anti-

biotics at the first sign of AOM.

"Standard treatment for most cases of otitis media is with antibiotics, which can be effective if the culprit is bacterial (antibiotics, of course, do nothing to fight off viruses). But, according to many research studies, antibiotics are often not much more effective than the body's own immune system. And repeated doses of antibiotics can lead to drug-resistant bacteria that scoff at the drugs, while leaving the child screaming in pain."

Researchers in Sweden have found that antibiotics used to treat these bacterial infections "often wipe out beneficial bacteria that would otherwise compete with, or even kill, the pathogens." (*Sci News* 2001;159:68.)

Even if antibiotics clear up AOM, your child may simply have traded one illness for another. Side effects associated with antibiotics include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and yeast infections. Continued use of antibiotics can also reduce their effectiveness and require the use of stronger and stronger versions.

The Truth About Ear Tubes

For chronic cases of AOM, tympanostomy tubes are often surgically inserted into a child's ear canal: a process that, in many cases, must be repeated several times. How much these tubes really help is a matter of debate in the health-care community.

A study of 429 children, under the age of three, found no significant difference between those who underwent tympanostomy-tube surgery and those who didn't.

"Children can have ear fluid and hearing loss for more than three months without having any measurable effects on development during the first three years of life. If most doctors follow the results of this study, it will mean that a fair number of children can be spared having tubes put in their ears, and their parents and doctors won't have to worry that the children will suffer developmental delays because of the decision to avoid that surgery." (*Child Health Alert* 2001:4.)



Don't Delay

AOM is a serious condition that, left untreated or improperly treated, can lead to hearing loss. If you suspect your child has an ear infection, contact your doctor of chiropractic and make an appointment for a full examination. And, even if your child is free of ear problems, schedule a chiropractic checkup to ward off possible future infection before it occurs.

Optimal Health University™ is a professional service of PreventiCare Publishing®. The information and recommendations appearing on these pages are appropriate in most instances; but they are not a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. Optimal Health University™ may be photocopied (NOT reprinted) exactly as they are published noncommercially by current subscribers ONLY to share with patients or potential patients. Optimal Health University™ may NOT be reprinted in any print or electronic publication including newsletters, newspapers, magazines or Web sites. Any other reproductions are subject to PreventiCare Publishing® approval. Copyright, 2009. PreventiCare Publishing®. 1-912-897-3040. www.preventicare.com