

CHILDHOOD EAR INFECTIONS

This week will be the week where more children visit their doctor with ear pain than any other week in the year. Why? Because all of the Halloween candy is overwhelming children's digestive function, keeping them up later (sugar High) and this makes for some tired emotional and phlegmy youngsters. Here is some info on what an ear infection is and how you can avoid unneeded often-ineffective antibiotic treatments.

The medical term for 'ear infection' is acute otitis media, which is an inflammation of the middle ear behind the eardrum. While ear infections are the most common health ailment for children in the Western world, they are virtually unheard of among children in China. In the United States, ear infections are now responsible for 30 million doctor visits per year. This is a 300% increase since 1975 (Pediatric News, January 1998). These statistics are similar in other developed countries. Children get ear infections much more often than adults. The highest concentration of ear infections occurs between the ages of 6 and 24 months old.

Main Symptoms of Ear Infections

- Pain
- Fluid in the Ear
- Fullness or Decreased Hearing
- Fever
- Nasal congestion/runny nose

Ear infections are the most common reason that children make extra trips to the doctor, take antibiotics, or even have surgery. Antibiotics are given to children for ear infections more than any other health concern. Most doctors prescribe antibiotics for treatment of ear infections, but antibiotics are over-prescribed and cause many side effects including a weakened immune system.

Current research reveals that 85-95% of the 10 million antibiotic prescriptions written last year for ear infections (in the US) showed no real benefit to the patient. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) treats the condition with herbal remedies and the benefits of these remedies are almost immediate. TCM can effectively treat ear infections and strengthen your child's immune system to prevent a further occurrence.

Ten Tips for Preventing Ear Infections

- Breastfeed your child
- Massage your child

Ensure proper nutrition, adequate sleep and decreased stress

Limit the size of the nursery your child attends

Stop giving your child a pacifier (i.e. soother)!

Avoid germs

Provide opportunities for plenty of fresh air

Avoid passive exposure to cigarette smoke

Avoid having your child drink while lying down

Identify and treat allergies

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