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### **Ear infections- Solve them Forever**

**By Dr. Deidre Macdonald, ND**

A sharp, throbbing or dull pain in the ear, loss of hearing, nausea, vomiting or dizziness characterizes an acute middle ear infection. The pain is due to inflammation, swelling or infection. Acute ear infections are usually preceded by an upper respiratory infection, allergy or food sensitivity. Chronic otitis media is constant swelling affects 20-40% of children under 6 and account for over 50% of pediatric visits.

Abnormal eustachian tube function is usually the underlying cause. The eustachian tube regulates the pressure in the middle ear and protects it from nose/throat secretions, bacteria and fluids. Swallowing causes active opening of the tube and since it is smaller and more horizontal in children, it is susceptible to blockage. Obstruction leads to accumulation of fluid and an infection if bacteria start to grow. Obstruction results from an abnormal opening mechanism or collapse due to an allergic/sensitivity blockage with mucous or infection.

One of the most common causes of ear infections is food allergies/sensitivities. These lead to inflammation and blockage: they need to be identified quickly using VEGA(electro-accupressure) or Elisa testing(blood) to be accurate and thorough. If the trigger foods can be identified and minimized, recurrent infections can be avoided.

As an infant, breast-feeding is encouraged to develop the immune system, minimize early introduction of food sensitivities, but the suckling develops the muscles, which help drain the tube. Always have the child tilted to feed. Make sure adults smoke outside, since passive smoke increases the incidence. There is typically a seasonal increase in the fall and winter due to increased exposure to viruses and bacteria. Daycare increases the risk again due to increased exposure to colds which cause increased mucous buildup.

It is extremely important to identify any vitamin and mineral deficiencies such as Vitamins C, E and the B's, Beta carotene, zinc and selenium. Optimal nutrition is very important and supplements may be recommended.

It is also important to strengthen the immune system by avoiding over-consumption of sugar (desserts, Pop, candy, chocolate) and drinking 4-6 glasses of water. Herbs such as echinacea, garlic, mullein, yarrow, oregon grape, St. John's Wort and thyme can be used in ear drops or internally.

As you can see, there is no reason to have repeated ear infections and the sooner the cause is determined the happier your child will be!!

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