



## Chronic Ear Infections & Chiropractic

Middle ear infections are on the rise. The ailment, also known as otitis media, has become far more prevalent in children throughout the twentieth century, increasing 150 percent between 1975 to 1990 alone. This dramatic increase illustrates the parameters of wise antibiotic use and its abuse, while at the same time revealing the effects of breastfeeding and formula.

The middle ear is the part of the ear that is enclosed behind the eardrum. A tiny tube, called the eustachian tube, drains any fluids from the middle ear into the throat. Colds and episodes of allergic runny nose, due to airborne allergens or allergies to cow's milk or other foods, block this eustachian tube with mucus and inflammation. When this tiny mucous-membrane-lined canal is closed off, inflammatory fluids build up in the middle ear cavity (serous otitis media), sometimes referred to as effusion. Over time, passage of nasal and throat bacteria into this tube, from pacifier use or especially when a child is lying on his back, can "seed" the middle ear.

Bacteria can then multiply to large numbers when finding a friendly fluid-filled middle ear environment, creating painful infection (acute otitis media).

Small children have Eustachian tubes that are more parallel than those in adults. This means that blockages can occur more readily, leading to increased ear infections. Parents can reduce ear infections and their chances by propping children's heads at night, not permitting bottle drinking at night, reducing inflammation throughout the body by limiting sugar, and by catching ear infections before they become severe.

### How can chiropractic help?

Chiropractic is a conservative and drugless approach to resolving chronic or recurring ear infections.

Chiropractors examine the ear and the cervical spine (neck) of the child to determine if there are any impeding subluxations or misalignments of the cervical spine which would cause increased pressure on the Eustachian tube. Primarily focusing on the first cervical vertebra and its relationship to the skull and Eustachian tube. Through a chiropractic adjustment (gentle manipulation of the affected area) the pressure is released and allows the tube to drain

The excess fluid from the ear.

A promising study published in the *Journal of Clinical Chiropractic Pediatrics* indicates that there is a strong correlation between chiropractic adjustments and the resolution of ear infections. 332 children with chronic ear infections participated in the study. Each child, ranging in age from 27 days to 5 years, was given a series of chiropractic adjustments. The results show that close to 80% of the children did not experience another ear infection within the six-month period following their initial visits. The six-month period included maintenance treatments every four to six weeks. Joan M. Fallon, D.C., the author of the study and the chiropractor who treated the children in the study, states that this pilot study can serve as a starting point from which the chiropractic profession can begin to examine its role in the treatment of children with chronic ear infections. She asserts that large-scale clinical trials need to be undertaken in the field.

**We wish you a Happy Thanksgiving Holiday!!!**

**OHS Staff**