

CHILDHOOD EAR INFECTIONS

By Dr.'s Boyd & Cindy Williams

Earache is the most common reason, for childhood symptoms related visits to a doctor. During the last decade, evidence has accumulated raising suspicion about the effectiveness of current medical treatment of middle ear problems in children. "Accepted" treatments have been re-evaluated and many have been found to be inadequate.

There is uncertainty about the cause of ear problems in children. There are often many factors that simultaneously act to make a child ill. Major factors that appear to contribute to development of ear infections and middle ear fluid include allergy, infection, mechanical obstruction, nutrition and environmental factors.

Common treatment for ear infection has been antibiotics. The role of antibiotics in treating ear infection is unclear. One study found that children with chronic earaches receiving amoxicillin experienced two to six times the rate of recurrence when compared with those taking a placebo. A recent review of 27 studies to determine the role of antibiotics in preventing acute earaches and treating chronic middle ear fluid suggested that "only one in six children have an improved outcome, and the improvement only last for about one month. In a review of antibiotic therapy for acute middle ear problems"...poor evidence supported the routine use of antibiotic therapy (in children 2 years and older)." There are instances when antibiotic therapy is indicated and helpful, especially when culture and sensitivity tests are done.

Excessive antibiotic use can disrupt the balance of beneficial intestinal bacteria. This may contribute to yeast overgrowth and harmful intestinal bacteria. Oral treatment with acidophilus or bifidus supplements is often helpful in such circumstances.

Other common treatments include tubes and adenoidectomy or tonsillectomy. Many conservative and natural treatment options exist as alternatives to these medical procedures. Great success has been reported in not only treating symptoms relating to childhood ear infections but also in preventing their re-occurrences. To learn more contact our office for a consultation.

For more information on this or other health topics, including information about our services, go to www.creatingfamilywellness.com or call us at 507-281-4878.